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THE WAY OF THE GODS

The MMCo.

THE WAY OF THE GODS

By
JOHN LUTHER LONG
Author of "MADAME BUTTERFLY" "MISS CHERRY BLOSSOM" "THE FOX WOMAN" "HEIMWEH" *Etc.* ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

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TO HIM WHO OWNS
HIS JOY BECAUSE
HE HAS BOUGHT
IT WITH SORROW—
OR WILL ******

TRANSFER FROM C. O. SEP 1925

PAGE

TADAIMA! (Wait a moment!) 3

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TADAIMA

TADAIMA

I THOUGHT I saw the bronze god Asamra (he who may speak but once in a thousand years, and whose friendship I keep by making time stand still for him in the stopping of the clock and its turning back) shake his head in doubt as I put the manuscript into its wrappings and addressed it to the publisher.

"Well?" I inquired, testily.

"Suppose They do not like it?" sighed the god.

"Why should They not?" demanded I, loftily.

"It has, among other unusualities, (I hope you like the gentleness of the word!) those dashes which — You ought to have learned by this time that They don't like to read over dashes."

"Why not?" asked I, again. "*I* like them. And, they are my own!"

"Well, you know a dash necessitates lucubration. It stands for something which you trust your reader to supply. That is unfair. If you are writing a book and receiving an

honorarium for it, do not expect him to do it. It is a bit like eating. One does not go to a restaurant, and pay for his food, then cook it himself."

"I have seen it done," cried I, "by particular people!"

"Ahem!" murmured the polite god: more polite on this day than I had recently observed him—which meant some sort of propaganda.

"It is not an ahem!" I went on in the unregenerate heat which the friction of the god often engendered in me. "Have *you* never seen it done?"

"I have," admitted the effigy, "seen a waiter sorely vexed to bring the materials for a salad—"

"Aha!" cried I, triumphantly.

"Gomen nasai," begged the deity, "I had not finished. I have seen a waiter, I say, sorely vexed to bring the materials for a salad which the maker has—spoiled!"

"Then," demanded I, with icy coldness, "you think that if I permit Them to supply a few thoughts to carry Them over the dashes They will—"

"Think something you did not think; per-

haps something worse," the effigy finished, calamitously.

"Or better?" I suggested, bitterly.

"Or better," agreed the god. "There is a small number of people (but, extremely small) who like to supply in full what you suggest in dashes. It tickles Them tremendously to think that you couldn't have done it so well; that you trust Them to do it better. Often They are certain that They have helped you over a place you could not help yourself over — hence the dash."

"Sometimes," I mused, diffidently, "that is true."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the image, and our mood became more human.

"But, do you mean to say," I asked, "that if I leave John and Jane in the upper hall, and take them up again in the lower hall, I must acquaint Them with the fact that John and Jane have been obliged to traverse the stairway to get away from the one and to reach the other? Am I permitted no ellipsis in so patent a matter as that?"

"They will expect the stairway," sighed the god.

"And a page for each step, I suppose! How can They differ from me? What other thought can They have than that John and Jane descended the stairway to reach the lower hall?"

"There may be a back stairway, or a fire escape," chuckled the deity.

"Then, I suppose, I must spend some pages in telling Them not only that John and Jane descended the stair, but that they did *not* descend by the back stair or the fire escape!"

"It would be better," said the idol. "They can skip it. But They cannot deny that it is there, as They can if it is not. They would rather skip what you supply than supply what you skip. One is Their judgment of your mental caliber — usually too small — the other is your judgment of Theirs — usually too generous. Ahem! There is a golden mean."

"Besides, however bad for literature it may be," laughed I, "at so much a word, it is good for me!"

"Well," ventured god, in doubt, "are novels literature?"

"I am not the one to say," I retorted, with some asperity. "I manufacture them. But I

can swear that they are better literature — if literature at all — than some of the criticisms of them — if literature at all."

"Have I touched a broken, perhaps often mended, place in your armor?" laughed the god.

"Well," I admitted, crustily, "I have read criticisms of English — no matter whose — the English of which was eminently criticisable. Here is one. The gentleman makes no distinction in the uses of 'which' and 'that,' and he has not a 'who' in his vocabulary."

"I have my eye on it," laughed the image, "and I admit that a few whiches and whos for thats, and — even — er — pardon! — a few of your dashes, would make its teaching more grateful."

"God," adjured I, happily, "thank you! Now do please stop and think! No speech, no thought, goes on without dashes. When we write the speech which flows mellifluous, we do violence to nature. And in all art the tendency is toward nature."

"Recently," began the deity, in that high tone which always meant checkmate to me, "I have seen the statue of an alleged athlete, in which his bunions were reproduced!"

"I saw it, too," I laughed. Indeed, the god and I had stared at it together.

"Well," the effigy went on, "that was certainly nature!"

"There is a golden mean," I re-quoted. "An artistic attitude toward all manifestations of art. If one has this one will appreciate — er — whether to reproduce the bunions. They may, of course, be picturesque bunions. Why, god, if one should reproduce human speech, as it is spoken, there would be a dash after every third word! Mine are quite within bounds."

"It would look queer," said the god, "and you would be called eccentric instead of original. Please don't do it! In fact stop it! Placate both your readers and your critics."

"Oh, as to that," said I, airily, "the labor would all be lost. Anything which is unusual to the superficial experience of the average person is glibly dubbed eccentric. You know how it is. A reader likes to find the dear old situations in advance of him so that he knows what he is approaching. There is the same fear of the terra incognita in literature that there is in nature. A book or a play which

is too novel a tax upon the faculties of a client is not to his liking."

"Who, pray, do you write books for?" asked the effigy, with the suspicion of a yawn.

"The people who read them," said I, cockily.

"Do They include the critics?"

"Oh, no," said I, hastily.

"Aren't they 'people who read them'?"

"Why, they are critics," cried I. "How can they?"

"That is hard doctrine," said the god, dully. "If you write for the people who read, you must submit to their verdict. And the critics are a part of them."

"A small part. But they pretend to speak for the whole. Permit me to explain —"

The god politely waited.

"Your critic approaches a book as a lawyer does his case — temperamentally — not judicially — with an opinion of it in advance or upon the first pages, which the book must either justify or fail to justify. The result appears in his published estimate. He states his view as if it were the only one. And, being delivered ex cathedra, the multitude take it as they do their preaching — for the gospel of Literature!

But how would you like that in your judge? Who is sworn to decide upon the evidence adduced alone?

"So it happens that every book is well cursed and well blessed, according to the humor of the dissector. And the cursing and blessing are usually about equal."

"There does seem to be something wrong about criticism which can be unanimous both ways," laughed the god.

"There ought to be some tribunal to which criticism could be referred upon appeal as law-suits are," said I. "But," I went on, hastening a bit to my climax as the god seemed to doze, "the most terrible of all criticism is the modern humorous kind—"

"I have heard an odious term used to characterize those who make it," whispered the deity.

"The man who can do nothing else — and usually he *can* do nothing else — can poke fun. It is a peculiarly tasteful form of iconoclasm."

Said the god: —

"If I should sleep, do not forget to stop the clock."

He pretended to do so.

That is his way when I have tired him.

J. L. L.

IMPRIMIS

IMPRIMIS

FOUR times on earth and once elsewhere Shijiro Arisuga thought the happiest moment of his life had come.

But you are to be warned, in two proverbs, concerning the peril of the thing called happiness, in Japan. One has it that happiness is like the tai, the other that it has in it the note of the uguisu. Now, the tai is a very common fish, and the uguisu is a rare bird of one sad note, reputed to be sung only to O-Emma, god of death, in the night, most often when there is a solemn moon. Which, again, is much the same as saying that, in Japan, at least, happiness is the common lot, and easy to get as to catch the lazy perch; but that it has its sad note, which may have to be sung in the darkness, alone, to death.

For in the East one is taught to be no more prodigal with one's joy than with one's sorrow. The sum of both joy and sorrow, it is said, are immutably the same in the world

from eternity. And of these each soul born is allotted its reasonable share as the gods adjudge it. So that if one takes too much joy out of the common lot, some one, perhaps many ones, must receive less than they ought.

Thus, one not only limits the rights of his fellow-men, who has no warrant to do so, but impiously exercises the prerogatives of the gods, than which nothing can be more heinous.

For this larceny of joy, therefore, the culprit must suffer more than his share of woe, until the heavenly balance is once more restored. And that may be in this life or another, in this world or another.

So you observe that in Japan, among those who yet believe in the old ways of the gods (and they are many!), it is perilous to be overhappy. For one is almost certain to pay for it with over-woe. And this is the happy catching of the tai and the melancholy note of the uguisu which wind through the carols of one's joy in the East.

Yet, when one is always happy, as Shijiro Arisuga was before we knew him, it seems difficult to say that here or there was a happier moment.

Therefore, you are to learn of each of these five occasions in their order, according to your patience, and, quite at the end, you are to be left to judge for yourself, which was, indeed, the happiest moment of Shijiro Arisuga's life. There will come a time, too, — at the end, — when you will know nothing of Shijiro Arisuga's own views upon the subject: he will not be there to tell them. I shall try to interpret for him. But you are not to be prejudiced by this judgment of mine, since you cannot know Shijiro Arisuga as well as I do until the end is reached — quite the end.

And it is nothing — the little story — you are, further, warned, until the woman enters. Indeed, nothing is anything — no story — until woman enters. Try to fancy Eden without Eve!

Not that Star-Dream is another Eve; nor that this is like the first love story. But there is a Garden and a Serpent; an Apple and a Woman. And, from that Garden, Shijiro Arisuga is driven with a sword which flames. But here my story differs entirely from that of the first love story. For the woman is left in the garden — alone! And it is eternal night.

And she can hardly stay there alone. For the uguisu sings. I wonder if Eve could have been happy in Eden alone? With the singing of the death-bird? You will remember that though they were driven forth, it was together: comrades in misfortune as in joy — yet comrades!

NIPPON DENJI

I

NIPPON DENJI

Now, the first of these five great occasions was that day Shijiro was accepted in the haughty Imperial Guards, most of whom had genealogies which would best impress us by the yards of illuminated mulberry paper they covered. Arisuga had many of such yards himself. That was not a question. But his inches raised many questions. The Guards were tall. Shijiro Arisuga was small. Though he was a samurai of the samurai, his ancestors kugé, it seemed impossible to admit him until Colonel Zanzi spoke.

"He is a samurai," said Zanzi, gruffly. "Of course all Japanese fight. But the rest, the commoners, are new to it. It is possible in a pinch for them to run away. It happened once to my knowledge. But a samurai goes only in the one direction when he is before an enemy. You all know what direction that

is. The commoner may be as good as the samurai in a century. But the samurai is always dependable now. I wish the whole of the Guards were shizoku. His uncles, the Shijiro of Aidzu, though they were shiro men at Kyoto, and so against the emperor, in that old time, were, nevertheless, kugé by rank. I do not see how we can keep him out of the Guards. I don't want to, whether he is tall or small."

Now Zanzi was an autocrat who constantly pretended that he was not. He had an iron temper which he nearly always concealed under courteous persistence, until his men understood what must be without his ever having precisely said that it must be. So, in this matter, he pretended to have left it to them. But he had decided upon Shijiro's final admission to the regiment, even though it was a time of peace, when one's qualifications were more strictly scanned than in time of war, simply because he was of the samurai, whom he adored.

"Nevertheless," warned Nijin, the recruiting major, "he is considerably below the physical standard."

"He is *not* the stuff for the Guards," alleged Yasuki.

And Matsumoto said: —

"I have heard him called 'Onna-Jin.'"

"Girl-Boy!" laughed Jokichi. "So have I."

"He used to carry a samisen about with him when he was a child — he and little Yoné, Baron Mutsu's daughter."

This came from Kitsushima, who added: —

"I have seen them at Mukojima, wandering under the cherry-boughs, hand in hand, and singing childish songs!"

"I have seen him doing that later, where the lanterns shine in Geisha street, and the little girl was not Yoné."

They all laughed. This was not seriously against him.

"Having settled it that he practises the art of music, I will surprise you with the information that he also pretends to the sister art of poesy," laughed Asami. "He is the author of 'The Great Death'!"

"What!"

From half a dozen of them.

And they broke into the song: hoarse, iron, clanging, mongolian! Within the six notes of the old Japanese scale!

(Do not be surprised at this. The Japanese army is full of poets. Indeed, the Japanese land is full of them. They will spin you a complete comedy or tragedy between seventeen or thirty-seven syllables. And, to practise poetry is not there as here, heinous to one's friends. I know of a gunner who sat cross-legged under his gun behind Poutuloff and wrote a poem concerning The-Moon-in-a-Moat. It was finished as the Russians got his range and dropped a covey of shrapnel upon him. After the smoke cleared they found him dead. And he is forgotten. But his poem was also found and lived on.)

This was "The Great Death" of Shijiro Arisuga.

"Yell of metal,
Strake of flame!
Death-wound spurting
In my face!
Hail Red Death!"

"Banzai!" cried Jokichi.

"Teikoku Banzai!" yelled Asami.

And, after the tumult, Yasuki, the reserved, himself said: —

"By Shaka, it is the very Yamato Damashi itself! The spirit of young Japan."

"Nippon Denji!" laughed jolly Kitsushima.

"Yes! The Boys in Blue — as they called them in America in 1864."

Matsumoto had been to Princeton. But the thought of war — giving his soul for his emperor — made him as mad as they who had never left their native soil.

"I take all back," cried Nijin, into the tumult.

"And I," yelled Yasuki, who had agreed with him.

"Let him in!" shrilled Matsumoto and Jokichi together. "If he can write songs —"

"And let him sing! Let him sing war-songs!" adjured Kitsushima!

Still, the happy Nijin, out of propriety of his office, as recruiting-major, pretended to wish to stem the current started by the song.

"One moment!" he cried.

But they laughed him down and again started the war-song.

"I *will* have a moment!"

"Take two!" shouted Jokichi.

"Singing and fighting are two very different occupations."

"No, they are precisely the same," laughed Kitsushima.

"I deny it!"

It was a fierce yell from Nijin, who was happiest, to pretend tremendous anger.

"I affirm it!" laughed Jokichi, into his face.

"Pretender!" cried Asami, shaking a happy fist at his superior.

Asami and Nijin stood with Zanzi for his admission.

Still, Nijin said in thunder:—

"Remember! poets never practise their preaching."

Nevertheless, if he had entered then, Arisuga would have been chosen, by acclaim, because of his song.

But enthusiasm cools rapidly, and these stoical orientals could be moved to enthusiasm by but this one thing — war.

So that after a month — two — it required another word from grizzled Zanzi, who had been in the war of the Restoration, to let Shijiro in.

"Jokoji!" That was the word. "His father is at Jokoji!"

And they demanded, and he told, the story of Jokoji — which, pardon me, I do not mean to tell. Save this little, so that you may

understand, that it was that last terrible stand of Saigo behind the hills of Kagoshima, where the Shogunate perished and the empire was born again in 1868. And the shoguns you may care to know were that mighty line of feodal chieftains who had usurped the throne from the time of Yoritomo, to that of Keiki. For all these years the imperial power had rioted at Yedo, in the hands of two generals, while the emperor, a prisoner in his palace-hermitage in Kyoto, had been but the high priest of his people.

They are there yet, at Jokoji, to the last man, Saigo and his gallant rebels, in a great trench, without their heads, a warning to future rebels.

After that other word — Jokoji — Arisuga was chosen.

Observe that they finally took him because of his father — though he died a rebel. Indeed, those old insurgents, of 1868, are gradually being canonized with crimson death-names, because they neither knew dishonor, no, nor suffered it.

THE FLYING OF THE AUGUST CARP

II

THE FLYING OF THE AUGUST CARP

THERE was a time, of course, when Shijiro was too young to think of being a soldier — save of the tin-sworded and cocked-hatted kind. And it must be confessed, nay, it was confessed, by his uncles with profound sorrow, that he cared little enough for even that. It is quite true that lighted paper lanterns gleaming in the night, and morning glories with first sun on them, and his small samisen, pleased him more. All this was quite heinous to his samurai uncles and they did what they could to correct it and instil into the little mind of the boy that love for the glory of combat which they had. But, as often happens, their care and their prayers availed them nothing, while their carelessness and their repinings availed much. Of that I shall stop and tell: the picture — the flying of the carp — how all the life of the little boy was

changed in one night,—so that he thought no more of Yoné, the lanterns and the flowers, but only of being a soldier.

It was that day when he was ten. All his relatives were present and they flew a tremendous number of paper carp. For you are to know that this is the way the gods have of telling one on one's birthday in Japan, whether one is to be as strong and virile as the open-mouthed carp in a swift wind, or as flaccid as they when there is no wind. The gods were kind and sent a propitious day. The carp stood out, straining upon their poles so that some of them broke loose and whirled cloudward — whereat the multitude of Arisuga's relatives shouted with joy. For this was an august omen of great good. Arisuga cared nothing for the omen. But the carp eddying upward, and those straining on their poles, were very fine.

The tired, happy little boy had been put early to bed, while his uncles remained to smoke and gossip. For one was from Kobé and the other was from Osaka, and they did not meet as often as they could have wished.

For a long time there was no sound save the

tapping of their pipes against the metal rim of the hibachi as they were emptied of their ashes to be filled again. This is still much the way of ceremonious old men in Japan. They have learned the comradeship of silence.

Presently this sound of the tapping pipes woke the little boy from his dreaming; and hearing whisperings in the room beyond he crept from his futons to the fusuma, which he silently parted to look and listen.

His small eyes grew greater as he saw that his two uncles were still there, and greater yet as he observed that they gesticulated in the direction of the picture of "The Great Death" while they whispered.

Now this was a thing which had always troubled him: that they whispered together about that picture, and that, somehow, he was included in the mystery. It had hung there at the tokonoma since he could remember. He had been taught to reverence it; for nowhere have pictures more influence than in Japan.

It was divided in the horizontal middle into two panels. In that below was carnage amazing. On the one side were the hosts of the emperor under the brocade banner (the

most ancient Japanese flag of war), yet armed with guns and using cannon. On the other side were the rebel hosts of Saigo with ancient halberds and spears and in bamboo armor, depending upon the gods alone. Dying upon one of the cannon, with a shout upon his lips and ecstasy upon every feature, was a soldier in the uniform of the ancient Imperial Guards. The panel above showed one of the heavens far toward nirvana. There this same soldier appeared glorified and on the way to his reward in Shaka's bosom. Of course! He had died for the emperor! The artist had not spared the glory when he came to write the picture. And yet he had preserved a certain family likeness, so that little Arisuga presently came to know, by the subtle presence and teaching of his uncles, that this was Jokoji, the graveyard-battlefield in Satsuma, and that the figure informed with the ecstasy of the great red death for the emperor, was his father!

That no part of the lesson might be lost, the artist had also shown, in that lower panel, the obverse of the reward of fealty. Those who had fought against the emperor were being tossed like dogs into a trench. Their heads

were off. And the little boy had been taught to have no pity upon them. Of course! He had none. They had impiously rebelled against that god whose other name is Mutsuhito, Mikado!

Moreover, in the lower corner of this panel, in an amazing opening among clouds with blazing edges, was that part of the hells reserved for the souls of traitors; and there the enemies of the emperor, who had died at Jokoji, were being variously tortured, in the intervals of their reincarnations.

A GOOD LIE

III

A GOOD LIE

SAID Namishima, Arisuga's uncle from Kobé, to Kiomidzu, his uncle from Osaka: —

"The flying of the august carp has been honorably auspicious and doubtless the gods now design to make him, in spirit, unlike his regretted father."

"It was the gods' punishment upon him for fighting against his emperor — that his son should miserably be an onna-jin," whispered Kiomidzu.

"Nevertheless the honorable picture has aided greatly in making him adore the emperor," protested Namishima.

"Yes, the money for its painting was augustly well spent," agreed Kiomidzu, wisely shaking his head.

"Some day he will know, notwithstanding, that his father was a rebel. Others know. It cannot unhappily be kept from him always."

"No."

"Perhaps then we shall be augustly dead —"

Both bowed and murmured again.

"And beyond his most excellent vengeance."

"Nevertheless," said Namishima, finally, "the august conscience within informs me that we have brought him up honorably well!"

"There is excellently no doubt of it!" agreed Kiomidzu.

They bowed to each other.

For a while there was silence and the tapping of the pipes. Then they spoke of a new and weightier matter.

Said Namishima — and here the little boy's eyes bulged: —

"If the soul of our brother continues to wander in the Meido, it will not be chargeable, now, in the heavens, to us, but to him. We have kept the lamps alight. We have taught him honor."

"We are too aged, also," agreed Kiomidzu, "to redeem him forth unto the way to the heavens by dying in his stead the great death. It is for his son!"

"In us, besides," Namishima went on, "the gods could not be augustly deceived. But the child has his name."

"Therefore, should he die the great death, the merciful gods may be deceived by the name into thinking it he who died at Jokoji. In that case he would not only be redeemed to the way to the heavens, but on this earth his name would be graciously added to honor."

So said he from Kobé. And he from Osaka: —

"For the gods are merciful!"

"So merciful, I sometimes abjectly think, that they desire to be deceived, for our peace of mind."

"Or, at least," mended Kiomidzu, to whom this was a trifle too much, "they will close their eyes while we augustly do it."

Namishima disliked a trifle the correction of his brother: —

"Do not the gods so act upon the minds of their creatures that they remember or forget? Well, then! It is true that now others know that our brother died on the rebel side at Jokoji. But do we not know that, in the course of much time, the gods can make this to be forgotten, and make to be remembered that he died on the emperor's side?"

"Yea, if his son should die for the emperor."

"Yea! For the name is the same!"

"And I have had a sign in a dream," said Kiomidzu, lowering his voice a little more. "Before me stood a tall god —"

They both bowed and rubbed their hands.

"— I knew neither his august name nor his presence. But his face shone as the sun, so that it is certain he was a god who can see the end from the beginning, and all between. And thus he spake: 'Rise and light the lamps and burn the sweet and bitter incense. For Shijiro Arisuga, he who died at Jokoji, shall have a crimson death-name.'"

"How shall that come to pass, augustness?" I asked upon my face.

"'Through his son,'" said the god. "'The names are the same. Arise and light the lamps and burn the bitter incense.'"

"And the augustness only vanished with the light of the new lamps I lighted before Shijiro's tablet."

"Yet," doubted Namishima, though a deity had spoken, "the vengeance of the gods must also first be accomplished — yea, satisfied full! And until he is redeemed by this unhappy onna-jin, must our brother wander

in the dark Meido — so think I! The new lamps will be sacrilege."

"Nevertheless, one cannot honorably tell," argued the milder uncle from Osaka, himself not convinced by his vision. "His father was no taller nor of a greater spirit than he. He may not always be an onna-jin. And, also, any day the vengeance of the gods may be satisfied and they will permit him to redeem both his own and the spirit of his father. For I believe it true that he was not beheaded by the victors at Jokoji, and cast into the ditch as dogs are cast, but committed the honorable seppuku upon himself. That he would do."

"Let it be hoped so. This is our one blot wherefor we cannot speak of our ancestors."

And they chafed a prayer from between their hands that it might all be so.

The little boy parted the fusuma yet more and looked. He had been taught that his face must always be as expressionless as if it were always under observation. And these old uncles had, more than others, taught him so. Yet now they were not observing their own precepts. Their faces were unmasked, and showed terror and anxiety. And this

communicated itself to the boy as he looked.

"Does it matter to the gods," asked Kiomidzu, "how fealty to the heaven-born-one is augustly inculcated?"

"'The way does not matter when one is arrived!'" said Namishima.

"And 'a lie which doeth good,'" quoted Kiomidzu, "'is, manifestly, a good lie.'"

"Happy is he," said Namishima, "who, being a liar for the truth, is willing, like us, to abide by its consequences from the unenlightened, to whom there is but one office in a lie — evil!"

"Nembutsu!" agreed the brother of Namishima, his hard hands rasping with his prayer as do the soles of worn sandals.

And then they went on, to the end of the story of this picture of "The Great Death," which had been painted and hung at the tokonoma when Arisuga was a child to deceive him into thinking that his father had honorably fought and died for his emperor instead of against him, that his soul was probably in Buddha's bosom instead of wandering in the alien dark Meido, unredeemed, that his body had been burned on a pyre instead of left to

rot in that great ditch in Jokoji. This these old imperialists fancied their duty. The little boy sobbed there behind the shoji.

"Sh!" whispered the uncle from Osaka.

"Sh!" echoed the uncle from Kobé. "He wakes. If he should hear, all would be of no avail."

They covered the fire of the hibachi and caused a darkness in which they stole away.

YET — A LIE LOOSENS FEALTY

IV

YET — A LIE LOOSENS FEALTY

THE little boy slept no more. He got forth from his small room and made the offerings, and lighted the incense which he had forgotten that tired, joyous day, and then he took down his father's ihai, and touching to it his forehead, pledged all his lives to make true that which had been made false. For, yes, their names were the same, his father's and his, and the gods are easily deceived — Shijiro Arisuga should be upon the brass of those who had died for the emperor! The gods would attend to the forgetting which must follow.

But this was not enough. The filial sin they had let him commit vexed his little soul.

Where he had made a dim wisp of fibre to burn in oil before the tablet of his father, he rubbed a prayer from between his small pink palms.

"Father and all the augustnesses, I did not

know," he said childishly, "that your spirit waited in the dark Meido for me to set it free. There were lies!"

Then he stopped and waited, for the tears ran down his face and choked his voice.

"It would have been better to teach me truth than lies. For they have not made me wish to fight and die for the emperor — lies. But this, this that you wait, wait always in the cold dark Meido for me to set you on your way to the sleep in Buddha's bosom, this it is which makes me promise, here, now, by all the eight hundred thousand, by my own soul's reincarnations, all of them, that you shall be free; that your name shall yet stand among those on the brass who are not forgotten."

"I did not know," he sobbed again. "And so I sang songs and made poems while you wandered there. I did not know. I was only a little boy. But now I am at once a man. It is true, august father, I must not lie to you, that I would rather be at Shiba with Yoné; I would rather walk on the hills with her hand in mine; I would rather sing as she plays the samisen; but I will be a soldier."

And then a strange thing happened — and

you must not fail to remember that stranger things happen in Japan than here — there came a crackling, ripping noise at the last word of that prayer, and the upper panel of the false picture loosed itself from the brocade to which it was attached and, falling, covered completely the lower panel and blotted out the whole. And that night yet, the little boy got his father's seal, and, where it fell, there he sealed it fast.

So that when his uncles again saw it they grew troubled, kowtowed and made a prayer. For suddenly, also, Arisuga, from a child, at ten had become man. All he said to them when they diffidently undertook a question was: —

"I know the samurai commandment: 'Thou shalt not live under the same heavens nor upon the same earth with the enemy of thy lord!'"

"The commandments are not for children," said the uncle from Osaka, gently.

"That I know well," answered Arisuga. "For I am not a child."

Said the terrified one from Kobé, "It does not mean that you must quit the earths and the heavens —"

"But, rather," supplemented the one from Osaka, "that they shall —"

"That you shall kill many enemies of your lord and live yourself — my child —"

"Cease! I am not a child," said Arisuga again, haughtily, "and I know the commandments!"

"Nevertheless that," said the one, "is a manifestation from the gods!"

He pointed to the picture.

"There have been many such," said the other. "It means something."

"Yes," said the little boy, significantly, "it means something!"

"But were you present when the gods obscured the picture?" ventured Kiomidzu.

"I was present," said Arisuga.

"And is it that which has changed you?" further ventured Namishima.

"No," declared Arisuga, looking upon them both sternly, and without an honorific for either.

"I trust," whined Kiomidzu, "that all is well between us?"

"All is as well as it ever will be," said the boy.

Then, after a silence, he added:—

"And the sun is setting!"

Which meant, indeed, that they were driven from the door of their brother's house by his son!

When they were in their going the boy said: —

"If I have sinned against the honorable hospitality, remember that a lie loosens fealty!"

And when they were in the way, one said to the other: —

"He knows!"

After some thought he who was addressed answered: —

"I think it very well. I have no regret. Our brother will now be released from the Meido. He will die for the emperor."

"However, we shall be unwelcome in his presence, so that I shall come less often."

To this his brother agreed with melancholy.

"Our work is now done."

Thus, Shijiro was much more alone than before, and had many more thoughts. But all were of war and the great red death, and none of Yoné.

And then, presently, he came to join the haughty Imperial Guards, who had never dreamed of being a soldier, but only of poetry, and cherry-blossoms, and his samisen, and the soft satin hand of the little Yoné. For it was true, as Nijin said, and as they all agreed,

Arisuga among them, that he was not the stuff out of which the empire made its Imperial Guards — quite.

It was in this time, in the presence of the obscured picture, that he wrote his song of "The Great Death."

And his years grew faster than his inches.

YAMATO DAMASHII

V

YAMATO DAMASHII

AND, slowly, that fantasy of a great death which infects every Japanese crept into the life and thought of Shijiro Arisuga. Though it came to him, in whom it had lain latent, hardly. But, perhaps for that reason, as is the case with certain diseases, it came with greater certainty and severity than if it had been always with him.

Yet the Yamato Damashii outstripped them both: the spirit of war — the ghost of Japan!

He still went with little Yoné to Mukojima sometimes, though less frequently. And the small heart of the small girl wondered and grew hurt at this. So that she asked him one day: —

"Little lord, why is it that we so seldom come here and that you no more sing, no more carry your samisen, and are grown too suddenly for your years a man with a face as serious as the unlaughing barbarians of the West — why is it?"

They were at Shiba. And Shijiro laughed again, as he had used to laugh, while he answered: —

"Sing no more! Listen!"

"Reign on for a thousand
years of peace!
Reign on for a myriad years
of ease!
Till the pebbles are boulders,
Moss grows to our shoulders,
O heaven-born lord of Nippon!"

"The Kimi Gayo!" said the little girl. "You sing the Imperial Hymn with that light in your face who never sang it before—whose face was never before so lighted? You answer my fear with fears."

"I sing a war-song, little moon-maid, because I am now a soldier," cried Arisuga, with a certain fanatical ecstasy in spite of his gayety. "I am going to die for the emperor the great death! I am going to set my father free to pursue his way to the heavens or another reincarnation! Think! The gods will love me for such a holy thing! Why do not you?"

"Oh, yes," whispered the little girl, "the gods will love you. And I. But who, then,

will come with me here? And who will hold my hand?"

"My spirit, I promise you that!"

A little chill crept over the girl.

"Yes," she answered doubtfully, "if I cannot have your body."

Shijiro still laughed.

"After all, a spirit is a safer comrade than a body. The custodians cannot drive it away from the tombs. And will you wait here for my spirit, as you do for my body?"

"Yes," she whispered, in her awe, once more.

But he gayly touched her.

"I will come like that — that — that!"

"I would rather have you so," said the little girl, touching him, as flesh touches flesh, not as spirit touches flesh in the East.

Though she suspected that he was laughing at her, it was in a land where both the spirits which loved one and hated one were believed to be always at one's elbow.

Now that it had all been decided — his career fixed, the way made clear, and he well in it — much of his absorption had passed away, and he was both gayer and gentler with her. But it was not as before.

"There will be others, with bodies," laughed Shijiro.

The small maiden shook her head.

"No, there will not be others. I know. Oh, how differently you speak to me now! You are suddenly grown a man with great thoughts. But you still think of me as a little girl with small thoughts. Well, perhaps I am. Yet I shall wait for you here. I can do that. The gods may not accept your sacrifice for a time. They may not accept it at all. And there may be no war for you to fight and die in. You may have to come back. No one can know the purposes of the gods. And when you do, I, with my small body and small thought, will be here only to make you happy."

"And, suppose," laughed Shijiro, treating her indeed as if he were suddenly become a man and she were still a little girl, "suppose I go away and forget — that often happens — and never come back?"

And Arisuga laughed again.

"I will wait," said the girl.

"What, after I have forgotten?"

"Do not tell me. Let no one tell me. Let me wait. Then your spirit may come. It is

cruel to wait, always wait. But it is not so cruel as to be forgotten."

The soldier still laughed.

"The spirit of all the goddesses thrives in you!"

And he touched her gently.

"But the gods may send it to me soon — the great crimson death."

"Then," answered the little girl, "I can die the great death, too, and still be with you — if you should wish!"

"What!" laughed Shijiro, anew, "little you — gentle Yoné — in the wild glory of the conflict, with a plunge into the fires of all the hells, in the madness of carnage, with a yell frozen on your lips? Shall little *you* experience that arch esctasy: your death-wound spurting your own warm blood into your own face? Then out, out, out into the eternal solitude and silence of souls awaiting other reincarnations? To that place called Meido? Ha ha, my fragile Yoné, the great red death — is not for you — not for perfumed little Yoné's. It is a man's death!"

At this she was reproved, but as he always reproved her, very gently. Yet it was won-

derful that his gentleness held here. She understood well her presumption in wishing to die the great death of a man.

"Pardon, small lord," she said humbly. "I spoke when I had not counted three — instead of nine."

He laughed happily.

"Speak whatever comes to your lips. All is good, because it comes from them — which are all good. But when you speak of the things which are a man's, I look at your stature and — laugh! I tell you what is yours — little Yoné — and what is mine!"

She tried to forget that he was not much taller than she.

"No, forgive me; I must die only the small, white death of women and children. But, until it comes, I shall be here where you and I were happy together. And if you die, still caring for me, your spirit will come and touch me, as you said. That much I know. You have said it! But if you have forgotten, then there will be no touches; then I will still wait until I die. It will not be long."

"Little one," said Arisuga, in pity, "we have lived and loved together here. All has been

good. But it is as a splendid summer day which one forgets, in the glow, the madness of glory, the moment the call comes! This we did not know, the madness of glory, and I had never thought to learn. But it has come, and it is greater than all love. Should the call sound now, I would leave you where you stand, and go upon the business of our sovereign. As it is," he laughed, "we shall once more go homeward hand in hand!"

And so they did. But still it was not as before. It never could be. As he had said, this madness of glory had obscured all love.

YONÉ

YONÉ

VI

YONÉ

THE war with China got slowly into the air. Troops were mobilizing. The Guards were being fitted with uniforms for a warmer climate. The army was thrilled with that nameless thing which speaks of action to the soldier. Maps and plans of campaign grew over night. Nurses were gathered where they could be most easily requisitioned. Plans for hospital and transportation service were born and matured as certainly now, as if the army had lived in an atmosphere of war instead of peace for many years. But when the actual going came near, Arisuga thought of Yoné. There would be no more of that. And when it was said, a certain sadness came and stayed with him, when the glory dulled a little. For it had been sweet. And it might be only once again. Marching orders were imminent.

So that, though it was even, and Yoné

might not go out in the even, he found her one day, when the sadness came, and they stole through the house's rear to that tomb of Esas in Shiba, where they had made a seat of stone and moss. They had never before been alone together in the wood at night, and Yoné was terrified, as a maid ought to be, while Arisuga was brave, as a soldier should be.

Yet, notwithstanding these adverse circumstances, it was there — at the tomb of Esas, on this night of nights to Yoné — that they made together that song of "The Stork-and-the-Moon." And it was on this night, while they sang it (without the samisen, for Yoné was reposing too snugly against one of Arisuga's arms for him to play, though they had the samisen with them), that the watchman came with lantern and staff and cried out that he had heard a song in that place of sacred tombs — a foolish, worldly song — and adjured the sinners to come forth and be punished.

Now both were frightened suddenly, and Yoné crept deeply into the arms of her soldier for protection. And she did not vacate her place of safety when the watchman had passed on; Arisuga prevented her.

For he had not in the least fancied how sweet that might be. And her fancies had fallen short of truth. And yet other things passed there at that tomb of Lord Esas which I shall not stop to tell.

Later, perhaps, in this story, there may be occasion to tell what happened there at the tomb of Lord Esas on the seat of stones and mosses they had made: the promises, — if there were any, — the song, and all the joy of that night upon which little Yoné would have to live until Arisuga came again — for this was indeed all he left to her.

It was a disgraceful hour when they stole forth. And had the watchman seen them then, the gods alone know what the penalty would have been. They passed the walls safely; but there was yet before them the reëntry to the house of Yoné, which was more terrible. Yet they were strangely happy in their terrors, though Yoné expected, hoped, to be disowned and driven from home, disgraced in the eyes of the world. But also, in that case, Arisuga would marry her. Chivalry would demand it. Of course he had not exactly said so. In order that he might have the opportunity, Yoné protested: —

"I do not regret — not a word, not a thing!"

"No, it is my fault —"

"If they drive me from home, outcast me, I shall sing in the streets!"

"You!"

"Or go to Geisha street."

"You!"

"What, then, will I do, lord?"

"You will marry me — a little sooner than we planned, and live with my mother while I fight."

"Yes," breathed Yoné, quite content with this. It was more than she had expected. Indeed, she was so filled with content that it was all she could say.

Nevertheless, though this event had been arranged there behind the tomb, under the influence of the terror of the watchman, yet its consummation was put a long time off, for the parents of each had to be consulted, cunningly, as if it had not at all been arranged. And this marred Yoné's happiness a trifle; for, if marriage was anything like that behind the tomb, it could not come too soon. And, however soon it might come, it would not be soon enough, for soon enough was now, and that was passing.

Besides, she hoped it might happen before his sacrifice; for though she would then be his widow and quite sure of his spirit, that first personal contact by the tomb of old Lord Esas had been sweet.

However, there seemed, happily, no way of escape from an outcasting and the consequences they had fixed upon, and this grew upon them more and more as they went homeward, so that as they were yet quite happy in it they came into the vicinity of Yoné's home. Now, by that time all the details had been arranged: Yoné was to go to Arisuga's mother, where a complete confession would be made. Then, on the morrow, the consent of the parents would be asked, which, whether it were or were not obtained, would be the signal for the wedding preparations. For in the one case Yoné would be the daughter of her parents, whose consent would have been obtained, in the other of his whose consent was sure.

Then they looked up to find themselves almost in the midst of a great fire which their absorption had kept them from noticing. And it was at once but too plain that Yoné's home was in that part of the district already burned

clear. Of course there were parents and brothers to think of at once, and in thought of their safety Yoné forgot the opportunity for her outcasting and the hastening of her happiness. When she remembered, it was too late.

She had been pounced upon by her father, and borne in joy to the rendezvous where all the brothers and sisters, as well as the parents of Yoné, were now in prosaic safety and little perturbation. Shijiro Arisuga had, upon the appearance of the father, ignominiously disappeared — which, indeed, was the best thing which could have happened for Yoné, so far as her safety from scandal was concerned, and the worst so far as her wish for an immediate marriage was concerned. There was, now, not the least hope of an outcasting. No one had even seen Shijiro, it appeared, nor knew of their going away or coming back together.

"How did you escape, my pleasant daughter?" cried the happy father, embracing her.

"I do not know," said Yoné, with some truth, looking furtively about for Arisuga.

"And fully dressed?" asked the father again.

With a sigh of disgust, Yoné answered again that she did not know.

"It was an interposition of the gods."

"Yes," sighed Yoné, in her heart, "I suppose it was an interposition of the infernal gods."

For Shijiro was undoubtedly gone, not at once to return.

"The smell of fire has not even passed upon your garments," pursued the delighted parent.

"It is very strange," sighed the daughter.

"The gods love you!" declared her father.

"I suppose so," answered Yoné, indifferently, thinking of quite another escape and another love.

It happened that the next day the *Kowshing* was sunk and the Guards started for Ping-Yang.

PING-YANG

VII

PING-YANG

ARISUGA sang for the Guards, and made rhymes and laughter, and they liked him tremendously, as big men are inclined to like little ones, until they reached Ping-Yang, when they liked him still more for something better. You will remember how the first assault of the Japanese was met by the Chinese, who had yet to be taught defeat. The big Satsuma color-bearer was killed, and the flag fell in the polluting Chinese dust. It was little Arisuga who raised it — to such a shout as cost the Chinese the hundred or so men they could spare at that time. And he stayed out there, with the flag, where the Chinese were, when the rest retired, and taunted the enemy with polite epithets, kept his pistol going, and finally came through without a scratch!

Thus, the smallest member of the Guards had demonstrated to the greatest, the thing

which helped to win their other victories: that though their enemy was not lacking in courage, as they had thought, yet he could neither manœuvre nor shoot.

Afterward, there was a contest for the picturesque office of color-bearer. Some of them wanted Okuma. And Arisuga was willing, of course. He knew how impossible it was to him at his size. But Colonel Zanzi said the colors belonged to Arisuga.

"Men get what they win in the army — nothing more, and not less. Here, no honor goes by favor! A man passes for a man until he is proven otherwise, no matter who or what he is, or whether he be five feet or six. In the army there are neither eta nor samurai, only sons of the emperor."

After the peace of Shimenoseki there was dull barrack life for little Arisuga, far from Yoné, until he led the allies in their assault upon the gate of the Hidden City. You will remember that the Japanese were conceded the advance. After the first repulse they disentangled Arisuga from a heap of Chinese with the colors still upright in his hands. The wound was in his forehead. The great death had been near.

Now it happened that the next day a man with a Japanese name was brought before Colonel Zanzi and desired to know why it was that wounded Japanese soldiers were taken to the houses of the Chinese when there were Japanese houses near where they would be not only welcome but — Well, he had a pretty daughter, and the Chinese annoyed her by their attentions. A Japanese soldier in the house, a flag in the yard, and a pink ticket at the door would be not only glory but protection.

"I see," laughed the colonel. "Will a wounded one do?"

The visitor thought he would — if he were the young man who had been carried to the house of Han-Hai next door to him, the day before.

"Very good," smiled the colonel. "I observe that we are not only glorifying the emperor, but assisting a countryman to humble his Chinese neighbor. Very good!"

"It is not that," said the Japanese in China. "My daughter has seen him."

"Oh-h! Oh-h! He will have good care!"

Without another word the smiling commanding officer wrote the order for his transfer.

And the next day Orojii Zasshi was the proudest Japanese in China. For the imperial sun-flag waved over his roof; the pink ticket, to indicate that a soldier was quartered there, was tacked to his door-post; and within, in the most sumptuous room the house afforded, lay Shijiro Arisuga, color-bearer.

DREAM-OF-A-STAR

VIII

DREAM-OF-A-STAR

WHEN Arisuga saw the face of "Hoshi-no-Yumé," some days later — and this "Dream-of-a-Star," as he at once called her, was well enough worth seeing — he said first: —

"It is not like what I thought it, angel."

Referring, of course, to the great red death, which he thought he had suffered — and what had necessarily followed.

"No," answered Hoshiko, comfortingly, remembering what the surgeon had said, that when he came out of his delirium he would probably be a bit queer.

"I suppose, after all, that the earth-heavens are much like the earth."

"Yes," from Miss Star-Dream.

"I don't think you understand me, since you answer only yes and no?"

"I understand your *words* perfectly. I am Japanese!" answered the lips of Hoshiko, while they slowly smiled. "But your thought —"

"How lucky! For, I suppose here all peoples are mixed."

"Yes. There are all sorts: Russians, Germans, Americans, Frenchmen —"

She was thinking of the allies.

"It looks like Japan."

This was the interior which he was seeing.

"But you think it is China?"

"Yes! Out there it is precisely like the place where we fought."

"Yes," said puzzled Hoshiko.

"I suppose the gods surround us in the heavens with the things which have pleased us most on earth."

Something made him look at the girl who flitted near, and the same thing made him connect her with this state of celestial bliss.

But he sighed and turned from her. In the heavens, of course, she was incorporeal, and, while patent to the eyes, would fail like the air itself to the touch.

He looked through the window, then, at the Forbidden City.

"But there is no fighting here now," ventured the girl.

"Naturally," agreed the soldier.

"The Forbidden City is taken."

"I am glad to hear it. How long have you been here?"

"About thirteen years."

"You couldn't have been more than three or four when you died! I don't understand."

But, now, Hoshiko at last did. And she laughed.

"Excuse my levity," she said. "I am not dead, and you are not. I am not an angel, and this is not a heaven!"

"Oh!" said Arisuga; and then, "All right," as if it were a thing to be endured. He ended by also laughing. "But you must excuse the mistake. It seems a good deal like a heaven, and you more like an angel."

Still, as he looked about, and at the girl, he was not sure. That is what they were likely to tell a sick man.

"Might I touch you?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" cried the girl, with a pleasure which challenged his attention. She put herself within his reach.

"It is *not* a heaven," he agreed, when he had passed his hand along an exquisite arm.

"I am honorably glad that you are not dead," breathed the girl, bravely. "Are not you?"

And every little atom of her showed that she was glad and begged that he might be. Though the mists were still in the brain of Shijiro Arisuga, he could not help knowing both of these things: her innocence had uncovered them so completely. For a moment he studied her. Then he answered a tardy yes to her question.

"For such as you it is good to live — yes — and —" The soldier stopped to sigh. "Good for others to live near you for the little while."

"For a little while, lord?"

She thought it the mere hyperbole of their race.

"Oh, you shall be old, old, old, and beautiful, with long white hair and perhaps a beard, and all the earth shall worship your piety —"

Arisuga laughed and caught a hand to stop her.

"Lord," she went on, "most vast lord, I will make you. Yes! I have thus far made it to be. When they brought you they said you would die. So said my father and mother. But I —"

She turned and summoned her maid with fierce irrelevance.

"Isonna, come here!"

The maid hastened from the next room, where, it is almost certain, she had lain with her ear to the fusuma, and then Hoshiko's mysterious purpose appeared.

"But I — Isonna and me — this is Isonna, my ugly maid — Isonna and me prayed for you — wept for you; you were so beautiful and bloody. And Benten — see, I have Benten always near! Benten loves the tears of sympathy, and to her we prayed, so —"

"I owe you and Isonna my life," laughed the soldier.

"No, Benten," whispered the girl, now answering his laugh with a smile. "And she will grant other prayers of ours — Isonna and me — will she not, Isonna, you little beast? Why do you not speak?"

Isonna corroborated her mistress by a deep prostration.

"And so we have asked for long life for you, very long, until the pebbles grow to boulders and the moss grows to your shoulders —"

Arisuga laughed, in frank joy of her.

"And suppose, you who are so powerful with the goddess of beauty — for which I do not

blame the goddess — suppose I have sworn to die the great death, to release my father's soul from the Meido so that he can be born again, and for the glory of the emperor?"

"Oh!" gasped the girl.

The soldier went on.

"—what will the other gods think of me, saving Benten, if I stop here and forget to die because a woman has hands, a voice, and eyes?"

"No, no!" cried Isonna, in sudden strange anguish.

Then she prostrated herself in abjection.

Arisuga rose on his elbow to look at her.

"What have I said to cause such sorrow?" he wondered. "Let me see. It was about your hands and voice and eyes."

"Yes!" cried mistress and maid together.

But it was the maid who went on:—

"And you must not, mighty lord. You must not find any beauty in my mistress's eyes and hands and voice. None anywhere. It is evil for both you and her!"

"Who said I found any beauty there?" smiled Arisuga, languidly.

"There is a secret, lord —" the maid went on in a frenzy.

But Star-Dream, suddenly grasping the place of her heart with both hands, cried out to the maid, as if she were desperately wounded: —

"Go, go, go, little foul beast! What do you do here? Who called you? Go!"

The maid disappeared like a spirit. Star-Dream found herself upon her feet, still gasping with ecstasy and terror together. Then she at last turned slowly toward the bed and smiled a sick mechanical smile.

"Lord, you said," she prompted. "Say on. Do not listen — do not observe the ugly Isonna. She has a trouble of the head."

Hoshiko drooped her own in some sort of gentle guilt.

"Ah, but I displeased you also," said Arisuga.

"Lord — I — no. I have a distemper. In it I am harsh to Isonna. That is what she is for. That is why my father keeps her. That she may bear my distemper. Presently I will go and put my arms about her, so, and all will be well!"

She illustrated with her own person.

"So?" asked the soldier, laughing; "certainly all will be well!" and she came with

another laugh and knelt at his bed. She touched him. She chattered on helplessly.

"Truly, all will be well. She loves me, wicked as I am to her, and with a touch I can win her!"

"Yes!" he agreed. "Or any one, I should fancy!"

Thus, at least, she had cunningly won him from his wonder at the scene he had just witnessed, if she had not won all else she had hoped for.

"May I ask a question?" said the girl.

"A hundred," said Shijiro.

"Lord, you said — you called me —"

"Yes," laughed Arisuga. "The eyes, the hands, the lips —"

"I am not beautiful —"

"I did not say so."

"My hands are not —"

She held them out that he might see that they were not. The soldier examined them and then said: —

"No, the maid was right. I find no beauty there."

"And my eyes — they are only beast's eyes —"

"Let me see," begged the soldier.

She came closer, and seriously opened them upon him. It was very hard for Shijiro looking into them to nod his assent that they were beast's eyes.

"Then the question is," said the girl, with innocent mirth, "why, if I am not beautiful, if nothing about me is, why did you do so?"

"Do what?" demanded the soldier, with a pretence of savagery.

"Look so into my eyes, touch so my hands, listen so to my miserable voice?"

"I supposed that I was in a heaven, and that you were an — attendant," said Arisuga.

"But after you knew that you were not in a heaven?"

The soldier gave up with a laugh.

"I see that we shall be very good friends," he said. They laughed together.

"Lord," she said, "I do not know whether you speak true!"

"I," said the soldier, "have the impression that I have lied to you about you."

"Shaka!" breathed the girl, between laughter and fear.

"Did you wish it — what I did — said?"

"Lord," confessed the girl, "I wish to be as beautiful as the sun-goddess, so that you must — do — say — !"

She crept closer. It was as if she caressed the soldier.

ISONNA

IX

ISONNA

On another day Hoshiko asked: —

"Lord, must it be soon — now — that you die?"

"Now," he said, with a pretence of severity.

"Is the day fixed?"

"Yes. Am I to wait here because your eyes are not exactly a beast's, while my father languishes in the Meido?"

"Yea, lord, if you are hap — happy. For the spirits of our augustnesses, no matter where they are, even in the suffering of the hells, are not sad while they make us happy."

"In what book did you learn that?" demanded the soldier.

"In the Bushido," lied the girl, seriously.

"Then I have not read the commandments of the Bushido with sufficient care. I must do it all over. I am glad that there is such a doctrine. One may keep to a holy purpose, but

need not hasten it. And to-day I like to linger from the red death; I like it well!"

"Yes, lord, that is a filial duty. To die for — for — the repose of your father's soul. But there is no need of — haste?"

"No," said the disgraceful young soldier, "there is no need of haste."

She laughed and touched his face — where he caught and held her hand.

"Perhaps, many many years?"

"Perhaps," said Arisuga.

"Until you are mi — married?"

"Perhaps until I am married."

"Beautiful!" cried the girl.

"And who would you have me marry?"

"Isonna!" laughed Hoshiko, "if you were not so great, lord. Oh, she is most sweet to men! Often I have wondered that men do not marry her! Isonna!"

Again the girl plunged from the next room.

"Isonna," said her mistress, "ugly little beast, you are to marry the lord soldier when he is a trifle better."

Isonna forgot her manners in the violence of another amazement. Arisuga shouted with happy laughter.

"Vast lord," wailed the maid, as if she believed it all, "there is the same reason in me as in my mistress, that —"

"Sh!"

Hoshiko put her two hands violently upon the garrulous mouth of the servant.

"You little beast! Is not once enough? I dislike to kill you. But I suppose I must!"

When all was well again she turned to Arisuga: —

"Then you will need a servant — and I am very industrious, am I not, Isonna?"

Isonna said nothing. This seemed safest.

"Is she industrious, Isonna?" asked the mystified young soldier. "We will have no servants who are not industrious!"

"No," said the frightened maid to him, and "Yes" to her when she had looked, first, the way of her mistress, then the way of the soldier.

"Do I not curl the futons, dress my hair, fill my father's pipe, clean the sand out of his sandals, mend his bed-netting, tie his girdle, cook his rice?"

Isonna said yes.

"I am convinced," laughed the soldier. "When I marry Isonna you shall serve us."

"Go," said the girl to the maid, "and be ready when the lord commander wishes."

And when she was gone the young soldier and the girl laughed again together.

"Almost," said the girl, "she lost me my place in your household."

And one could not be certain from her words that she was not serious.

The soldier had again the impression that she had barely prevented some momentous disclosure. It gave his gayety pause and his coquetry caution.

"Then I am not in a heaven," said he, "and — *you* are not a heavenly person?"

The girl dropped to her knees beside him and asked: —

"I wish I might make this a heaven to you, and that I might seem — truly — like — a heavenly — person!"

"I never knew one on earth who seemed more like one! Be content."

"Alas! that is only because you have been ill and I have been kind to you?"

"You are very pleasant — very pleasant!" said Arisuga, setting the current of desire away from the peril of her. "What have you been

doing with me all the while I have been here?"

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding his retreat from sentiment, the wounded soldier possessed himself of one of Hoshiko's hands—quite by an unconscious act of fellowship. But one was not enough; he took the other. As he did it, he remembered and smiled because his hands and his will were at such variance.

The Lady Hoshi did not stay him. Indeed, she had always liked the stories of those bandits in the mountains, who took pretty girls and were never heard of again.

But she had to get away just then, much to her regret, because, out of her innocent honesty, she was not prepared to answer the question he had asked her — What had she been doing with him during the period of his delirious unconsciousness? And he repeated it!

Now to call one a pleasant person is about as far as a Japanese lover ordinarily goes. But Hoshiko was disappointed with it. What had gone before promised more.

In her disappointment, her humor became as testy as it was possible for her humor to become, which was, after all, not very testy. And so it remained for the day.

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THE TASK OF JIZO

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X

THE TASK OF JIZO

"WHY didn't he take me?" she demanded savagely of Isonna the maid that night as she was putting her mistress to bed in the adjoining room. "And quickly! Like that! I would!" She clapped her hands — and then said: "Sh! Do you think he heard that?"

The maid reassured her.

"But *why* is a man satisfied with a hand — even two — when by a strong arm he might have —" she stopped to sigh and to look into the round mirror which the maid was holding up to her — "all!"

"All of what?" asked the astonished maid.

"Me! This."

"Oh!" said the maid.

"If a man calls a girl an angel when he thinks he is in heaven, he has no business to call her only —" she stopped and sniffed disdainfully at the word — "*pleasant* when he finds he is not."

"What would you, then, have him to call you on earth?" questioned the puzzled maid.

"Angel still."

"Permit him a little time, mistress."

"Time! Time! What do you call time, you ignorant one? It was fifteen minutes! Yes! We had been talking fifteen minutes when he said I was a *pleasant* person! After saying I was an angel!"

"Oh!" said Isonna — which Hoshiko took for reproof.

"I have known him two weeks!"

"Yes," agreed the maid.

"And if you speak — if you suggest again, that which twice nearly escaped your lips, I will kill you. One night you will lie down, and, into your horrid, tattling mouth, I will pour, as you sleep, a something which will prevent you from ever rising. I have it always ready for you."

"But, your father?" whined Isonna.

"I, not my father, am speaking now!"

"I will be silent," agreed the maid.

"What is the use to take the trouble to tell him? Soon he will go and forget both us and that — what is the use?"

"I will be silent," said the maid, again. "I do not wish to die."

"And then — O Jizo, punish him!" She broke off and addressed another of her goddesses. "And then he had the unparalleled audacity to ask me what I had been doing with him all the while he has been here! After he had said angel repeatedly! O Jizo, punish him!"

"Well, well," comforted the maid, "why did you not inform him? Surely that was not difficult!"

"Oh! it was not, eh? Well, you blind little beast, do you *know* what I *have* been doing?"

"You have recovered him from his illness with the utmost tenderness and beauty," said the maid.

"Oh, you little fool!" cried her mistress, first striking her, then embracing her; "I have been falling in love with him. It happened that day they carried him into the house of Han-Hai, where live three daughters, all unmarried. You saw it; you were present! Do you not remember how beautiful and bloody he was? His eyes were closed, the sun shone in his face, and that was pale with here and here the

windings of a bandage, like an aureole. Oh, how we both wept! He was so young; and we thought that we could heal him with great care! We wept. My father did the one thing which would stop our tears — brought him here!"

"Yes — yes!" agreed Isonna.

"Now! Shall I tell him?"

"Oh, no, Lady Hoshi, no! That is a dreadful thing to do," sighed the maid.

"It is not dreadful. It is beautiful."

"But, dear, dear mistress, you must not love a man. That is what your father pays me to prevent!"

"Well, you haven't prevented it. And I shall tell my father, and he, also, will kill you and get me some one who is more useful. That is two killings for you!"

"But I did not know, mistress! Perhaps I do not know love."

"You do not, Isonna. For it has been right under your nose these two weeks. After all, I will not tell my father. For he might give me a maid who would not be as pretty as you," and she hugged Isonna, who was not pretty at all. "And in exchange for my mercy you

must not be odious, but recognize that it is too late. Is it a bargain?"

Well, any bargain the lovely Hoshi might propose to the plain Isonna would meet with her approval, though it should mean her death the next instant, and so this one was approved.

ANGEL OF THE EARTH-HEAVEN

XI

ANGEL OF THE EARTH-HEAVEN

Now, the next day, Arisuga, laughing, greeted her with that very word — "angel"! Perhaps he did hear a bit of their talk. For the walls between them were very thin. This was the way of it: He clapped his hands so early in the morning that he was amazed at the despatch with which she arrived. But we are not. For we know that she was waiting just outside of his screens to be called. She meant to dissemble and pretend that she was at a distance. But you can fancy how instantly she forgot that when he called: —

"Angel! Angel of my earth-heaven!" Though there are no angels in the Japanese heavens.

You have seen that, in her presence, he had forgotten his caution! Observe, now, that he did likewise in her absence! What end but one could there be to such recklessness!

"Stand there! I want to look at you!" he cried when she came. For the light of the morning was in her face — and the light of love, too! "By your Jizo," he said, then, "I am glad you are *not* an angel!

"Cherry blooms are very pink,
But not so pink as you are!"

he sang, laughing, and her heart was so choked with ecstasy that she had to put both hands to her face and run from the room hearing him still call "Angel" after her.

"O Benten," she cried to the goddess of beauty in her room, "that is different! He is not careful now — he is awake to-day! *We* must beware of him! There is danger!"

And at once she returned — with the water for his bath!

For, that was always her way: when he would say something to make her heart leap into her mouth, to fly from him in the direst panic, suborn the goddess, then hasten back to have it happen again.

"A heart is a strange thing," she laughed to him. "Sometimes it is here (at the proper place for it), sometimes here (in her throat), and sometimes here (in her sandals)."

"And sometimes," laughed the young soldier, "one's heart, which should be here (in his own bosom), is there (in hers)."

"And again," she rioted with him, "one's heart, which was here (in herself), is gone — gone — utterly gone —"

"That is quite proper," the soldier said. "For if you kept your own, you would have two and I none!"

"It is trying to get out!" she cried in mock alarm, holding it in.

"Let it come!"

But, just then, they heard the sigh of a moving screen, and the acid face of Hoshiko's mother looked in. She said nothing, only let her eyes rove from face to face. But that was very cooling. She closed the shoji and went away — apparently.

Now, for the benefit of her mother, whom she knew to be still behind the fusuma, Hoshiko tried to look very severe. She had taken the poppies from behind her ear and had pinned a napkin about her hair, and turned up the sleeves of her kimono, making herself all the lovelier as she very well knew in this fashion of a nurse.

"You are to wash your hands in this cold water to refresh you. Then I will take it away and bring you other water for your face."

But, in the end, she washed his hands for him, and his face, too, amid a great deal of laughter and splashing.

"And now," he said, "I will take every advantage of my defenceless enemy. I will make her give me my breakfast."

Though she demurred, Hoshiko was quite mad to do it.

"Beware!" she whispered, as she let a persimmon slip from between her chopsticks into his mouth. "In the East, walls have not only ears but eyes!"

"And no conscience!"

"What would you?"

She hoped that he might desire walls without senses, where they might be fearlessly alone.

"Another persimmon!" he laughed.

"No," she pouted, for his punishment, "nothing but the rice."

"Not all the hard hearts," he sighed, "are behind the walls!"

Then she gave him the most luscious of the persimmons.

"You haven't told me yet," he insisted, "what I did and what you did while I was unconscious. That is always interesting."

She filled his mouth with rice.

"But what did you do and what did I do?"

It came through the rice.

"Please drink," she said.

"What did you do, what did I do?" he sputtered.

"Pardon me while I wipe your mouth."

"But what —"

"Nothing. I did nothing, you did nothing."

"It must have been very dull for you," sighed the defeated soldier.

"Jizo —" she was praying to the goddess at her small shrine that night — "I am going to conceal and lie! I pray you to intercede with the Lord Shaka for my pardon. He loves me — and he must not know. It is for happiness, Jizo. *His* happiness, do you understand, dear Jizo?"

She cried out savagely in her further confidences to Jizo that night, when she was ready for bed.

"I *was* very busy — yes, *very* busy — falling in love with him! And you must intercede

with Shaka for my forgiveness. It was a lie. But could I tell him that I was busy falling in love with him?"

The maid had come in to put her to bed.

"Strange prayers!" she said.

The mistress turned, intending to rebuke her. But she laughed.

"Come here and stop that laughing. He will hear!"

"Mistress, I did not laugh."

"Come here!"

When the maid was abject before her she said: —

"Why do you stare?"

"At the joy."

"Where?"

As if it were a symptom of disease.

"In the face."

"I have a trouble of the heart. Feel! That is why!"

"Yes!" said the maid, pretending terror.

"It will kill me!"

"Yes!"

"It will not!"

"No!"

They fell, laughing, together, to the floor.

"He does love me!"

"I know that much."

"But he does not know it — yet."

They laughed again.

"It WAS for *his* happiness!"

"Certainly!"

"Not mine!"

"No!"

"He shall be told that he loves me!"

She shook her fist at her favorite deity, sitting unruffled in her shrine.

"Benten! You shall let him know!"

"The goddess is too decorous for that," chided the maid. "The only woman who tells a man that she loves him — "

"Is me!" cried her mistress to the shocked maid.

"Aie!" wailed the maid. "There is a kind of woman who does that, but she is not the lady Hoshi —"

"Oh, silence!" laughed the girl. "It would not take me a moment to tell him, if it were not for what he might think! And, perhaps, he is not wise and will not know enough wisdom to think that!"

"All men think that!" said Isonna.

"But, how can they," argued Hoshiko, "if they are not taught? How can he if I do not teach him?"

"It is born in them!"

"But how do you know?"

"I have studied," said the maid.

"Well, at all events, it was not that for which I petitioned the goddess: to tell him — that I loved him, you ignorant little animal. I asked her to tell him that he loved me!"

"Oh!" cried the maid, kowtowing. "I misunderstood."

"Now go to bed, you little scandal-monger!"

Isonna started. Her mistress recalled her.

"And — and, if there is a way of letting him know that *he* —"

"Yes," answered the maid, understandingly.

"And as to letting him know that I love *him* — "

"Yes?"

"Do you think that necessary?"

"I do not know the ways of love," confessed Isonna.

"You are a little beast," said her mistress. "That can wait — if he once knows that he loves me. At all events it is too dangerous. Go to bed, wicked one!"

IMPERTINENT ISONNA

XII

IMPERTINENT ISONNA

BUT the next day trouble, though not exactly of the heart, did arrive. It was one of Arisuga's days of retreat from Hoshiko. He asked her why she lived there — in China — when she might live in Japan, where she belonged.

She answered him that her father had come there many years before, when she was a child.

"I will ask him the reason if you wish."

"No, no, no!" laughed Arisuga. "What does it matter, my dear child?"

She ran away from him again. And all that day she kept repeating: —

"'My dear *child'!* I am as tall as he!"

And at night, again, while the maid was undressing her, it was that still.

"Now he shall never know who — what I am. For I *am* beautiful. The mirror says so. As beautiful as if I were not — what I am. Look, look and tell me!"

This the maid, for the hundredth time since he had come, did.

"You are, indeed, beautiful, dear mistress, yet, nevertheless, it is your duty to tell him! Otherwise he might wish to marry you. Already he loves you."

"I will not! And if you do, I will kill you!" threatened Hoshiko. "I will have these few days of heaven. He will go and not think of me again. He will never know. He will not have been contaminated. But I will have the few days in heaven! To him I am only a child."

And she fell to the floor and sobbed for an hour, during which the maid lay like a graven image at her side. Then she sat up and asked:

"*Now* you don't blame me, do you?"

"No."

"Anyhow, he will go as soon as possible."

"No, he will not," said the impertinent Isonna.

"He will! You know that he will! Say that he will!"

But the maid knew better.

"That is what men always do when they find out."

"He will not," said Isonna.

"You are very impertinent!" And her mistress punished her maid's impertinence by flinging her the amber bracelet she wore.

"Now, disobedient one, you shall tell me why you think such a naughty thing. Yet you cannot know. No one can see into his large mind. He keeps it closed. He is as wise as a priest. Not even I can enter it. And you are very ignorant, Isonna."

"Nevertheless, his mind is as glass to me!" insisted the maid.

"I will tell my father and he shall punish you with whips. Now, you dear little beast, I shall force you to tell me the reason you think in your evil mind the great color-bearer to the prince of heaven stays here!"

"You," said the maid, coolly refilling first the pipe of her mistress, then her own.

"I shall *not* tell my father," said Miss Star-Dream, "for I pity you. It is such a great lie that he would make Ozumi whip you to death. Yet it is a lie which makes me happy. Was I ever so happy as I am now — since he came?"

"No," said the maid.

"But he *will* go sometime — we agree upon

that?" questioned the mistress, once more hoping anything but that they did agree upon that. The maid was not blind to her hope.

"Not yet," she answered with a decision which gave joy to the girl's soul.

"He will. He must die."

"Not yet," declared the maid again.

"Do you suppose his love for me — *you* said it was love, I did not! — is greater than his love for the spirit of his father?"

"Yes," answered the maid.

"Oh, little beast!" cried her mistress, embracing her. "Benten, but I am happy!"

She chattered on: —

"Also have you noticed how beautiful he is? He has hair like the pictures of the gods — though he is a shaven samurai. And those songs he sings he makes himself. I am going to learn a thousand musical instruments so that I may play them all. I wish I could sing! And, Isonna, we never laughed — really — until he came, did we? Always that thing hung over us. But he is not to know it. And we may forget it! And, Isonna, have you noticed that exquisite habit he has of touching me, here, here, here?"

She laughed and made the serving-girl the illustrant of this aberration of the soldier.

"That he does when he wants me to look at something — often only himself. Or when I am not attending to his words. I used to shudder and go away from it — it was so strange — no one else ever did it. But I now think it very foolish to start and be frightened by such small things."

"I have observed you go toward it!" droned the maid.

"That is a vile lie!" cried Hoshiko. "Say, do you know what causes that?"

"No."

"His wife; he does that to his wife, and she — she is not a nice person, and likes it! Aha!"

"He has no wife," said the maid.

It was this she was hungry to hear.

"How do you know? Did he tell you?"

"No. But he wears stockings, not tabi. All soldiers do."

"Well, you suspicious little beast, what has that got to do with his wife?"

"I wash them."

"Well?"

"There are no darns."

"Oh! What then?"

"Holes."

"Isonna," said her mistress, solemnly, "I believe that you are as wise as you say you are! But, then, how do you suppose he learns it?"

"From you!"

"Am I so dreadful?"

"I have observed you giving those touches."

"He will hate me."

"Hate is not in the direction he is going," said the wise maid.

Hoshiko could have endured more of this ecstasy. But it was very late, and Arisuga had the soldier's habit of early rising. Moreover, the first thing he was wont to do when he rose was to clap his hands, in that way, and call for his earth-angel. So she said to Isonna:—

"You have been a naughty, impertinent, gossiping little beast. Put me to bed."

Yet, when this had been done the mistress embraced the maid and would hardly let her go.

"What a shame it is that one must sleep when one might talk of him! But, then, if one does not, one is hideous in the morning! And he calls the moment he wakes. Put out the lights and go to bed! I will listen to you no longer!"

Isonna had not spoken. But she did as she was commanded.

"Isonna!" the mistress called after the maid — who instantly returned — "I have had such a thought! Suppose he should never know! Suppose I should go to some place with him where there is no one who had ever known me? Marry him?"

"I should be there."

"You! Not unless I should first cut out your gossiping tongue!"

"It would be wrong. The gods must punish you!"

"How would the gods know? I should lie to them also."

"It would be very wrong," the maid repeated. "The only woman who deceives a man —"

"Is his *wife*, you naughty little beast! Go straight to bed! I hate you!"

ONLY TO TAKE HER

XIII

ONLY TO TAKE HER

It happened precisely as the wise maid had said. He did not go, but, on the contrary, protracted his recovery in a scandalous fashion.

For here it was that Arisuga began to suspect, for the second time, that the happiest moment of his life had come. If he had known that he was in love, as he did not, or that there was such a thing as this love he was experiencing, which he did not, he would have been more certain of that happiest moment. But a Japanese must be told when this has happened to him. And it must be in another tongue than his. For in his language there are no words for it — and he knew no other. He really was not quite sure, therefore, why he was lingering in China — only suspected it. How could he know, under the circumstances? No feeling like this had insidiously crept upon him when he had taken Yoné to Mukojima or

Shiba — even upon that great night which now began to go more and more out of his memory. And he did not even think of what he had laughingly prophesied to her — that forgetting — her waiting. He simply forgot her. Perhaps if Hoshiko had known of this defect in the character of Arisuga, she might not have loved him. What Arisuga remembered most about his and Yoné's excursions was that when they got hungry they went separately home and ate. But he had the feeling that he would stay here with Hoshiko and starve — or until some one from the regiment came and took him back at the point of a bayonet. For this was a most piquant and unusual condition of affairs between them: that they should be so much alone together, that there should be so little — almost nothing — of Hoshiko's parents, that she should be as frankly intimate as a geisha at a festival, who meant to please at all hazards. It was this volunteer intimacy which puzzled him most about the girl. But who was there to tell him that she had known him two weeks longer than he knew her? And that during all that halcyon time she had had her way with her adoration of him —

and saw no reason in his returned consciousness for changing it? Or that she had lived here untaught as a child? That to her, since she frankly adored him, there was only one reason why he might not as frankly know it — the one she had decided never to tell?

Before Arisuga became a soldier he had been a poet, a musician, a songster — one who had responded at nature's high behest to all manifestations of beauty. Now, in this time of peace and indolent convalescence, he went back to all that — almost as if the life of the soldier, which intervened, had never been. He had instantly called her "Dream-of-a-Star." And she was all this to him. It was good to lie in his futons and see the perfections of her grace as she moved about intent upon his healing. It was better to hear her pretty voice. It was best of all to feel her touch upon him and to see the lighted eyes which always accompanied it. At first there was the sense of having found a butterfly by the dusty roadside of his duty which might yield a moment of joy. But when he knew that, whether he wished it or not, he must lie here many weeks before he could fight again, the sense that he was

sacrificing duty to pleasure disappeared, and he let himself enjoy his nearness to the girl and let his poetic spirit revel in her fragile beauty without further thought of the duty which lay in wait for him. That, he finally decided, would attend to itself. A soldier is not long permitted to forget his duty.

But, the thing which continued to stir and puzzle him most was the fancy which now and then came, that he might have this wonderful creature precisely like the butterfly he had thought her. Indeed, he could scarcely get away from the impression that there were times when she offered herself to him. Yet though he was not very learned concerning women himself, he knew that there was only one sort who offered herself to a man. Sometimes her little timorous darings let him believe, for a moment, that she was of this kind. But nearly always the idea was quenched out by some act of such utter innocency as could not be mistaken for coquetry. Still the recurrence of an idea, originally erroneous, is likely to be strengthened by each repetition. And this was what was happening to the sick soldier.

Nevertheless he continued to fancy that of

all the spirits, from the moon-goddess down, none were so dainty, so fragile, so tender, caressing, and altogether lovely as this Hoshiko, who was not a spirit at all, even though she was there, day after day, at his bedside, suggesting herself to him with either the abandon of a child or the intention of a woman of joy. Had he been as wise about women as he was simple, and she as wise about men as she pretended, who had no wisdom at all concerning them, such a misunderstanding would not have occurred.

For she was not offering herself to him at all. She was a child with a toy. And at first the subtraction of this toy, even though the like and fascination of it exceeded any other she had ever had, would have portended little of tragedy. But later it was more serious. Something inside which had never stirred before began to stir now. This contact with a man, these intimacies with one not much more learned in the art of loving than she, had awakened the sleeping thing within which would one day be her womanhood.

As for her, one must not forget that at the last she wished to be adored. All women do.

But if a woman loves a man too much, he runs away. If she loves him just enough, he stays. If she loves him a little less than enough, he runs after her.

"If I were a man," said Isonna, "I would care for only such pretty things as you — not for wars and fightings — even great deaths. For what is the last heaven but a state of bliss! And if one has all the bliss one can bear or understand here on earth, is that not a heaven? And truly if I were a man, it would be extreme bliss to touch you, here, and here, and here, to put an arm about you so, to sit in the andon light, so — "

All of which things the adoring maid illustrated, to her saddened mistress, in the light of the night lamp, and to all of them her mistress agreed.

THE GOING OF THE SOLDIER

XIV

THE GOING OF THE SOLDIER

FOR the soldier must go. There was not a vestige of excuse for remaining longer. The terrible mother had entered his chamber, had looked at him, had said briefly that he was quite well. And Hoshiko herself had done everything but ask him flatly to stay. How could she do that? Isonna had warned her constantly of the sort of woman who did that in Japan. The mere asking would be enough — in such a woman — to advertise her as of joy. And for want of this word of asking, the heaven she had made was closing.

But Isonna and some of the circumstances of the case had taught her more and more that any more frowardness would be seriously misconstrued by the invalid.

"You are awake," said Isonna, mysteriously, who was not blind to the maturing of the thing called womanhood.

"Ah," sighed the happy and miserable girl,

"if to wake means this, then I wish that I might always have slept."

"You did not sleep," said the still mysterious maid.

"What did I then, little beast?"

"You dreamed."

"Then," begged the girl, with a piteous smile, "make me to dream again, and take care that I never wake."

"Ah, sweet mistress," said the maid, "there comes to all, in the matter of men, a time to sleep, a time to dream, and a time to wake. The sleep is best. For in that one knows nothing. The dream is sweet. But it never lasts. The waking sometimes is good — sometimes evil. Good it is if all is fair between a man and a woman. Evil it is if all is not. And, mistress dear, all is not fair between you and him. So there is another thing after the waking — which the gods make."

"What is that, wise little beast?" laughed Hoshiko.

"It is the forgetting which heals," said the maid.

"I do not wish to be healed," answered her mistress.

"Then must you be always ill of this thing."

"So be it. That is better than a forgetting."

"But it must go no further," pleaded the servitor. "There must be no touches, no eyes, no beatings of the heart."

"Can you stop the beating of the heart? The adoring of the eyes? Can any one?"

"Yes. In your room waits always the goddess of tranquillity. Go there. Stay there. She will soothe you."

"Yes, when he is gone — quite gone — then we will try for that tranquillity. We had it before he came!"

"We shall have it again," cheered the maid. "As soon as he is gone —"

"Oh!" A flash of Hoshiko's old manner energized her. "I know a better and happier way to insure that tranquillity."

"What is it?"

"Ask him to — stay! You!"

The maid only gasped.

"Yes," said her mistress, more timorously than she had ever spoken of him.

"Ask a man to stay?"

"Certainly! That is what I said. Am I so hard to understand?"

Hoshiko spoke with more pain than asperity.

"You may — with honor —" pleaded Hoshiko. "He doesn't love you. You do not love him."

"And if the asking of these lips and hands and eyes and this voice, all that are permitted you, are not potent — how shall I be? How shall any one or anything be? Let him go."

"Stop!" cried her mistress. "He is a god. We are creatures. What we wish we must petition for as we do the gods. Yet I dare not — will not you?"

"No!" said the maid. "I know the penalty. I do not wish you to know it."

BUT WHAT COULD HE DO?

XV

BUT WHAT COULD HE DO?

HOWEVER, it all came out involuntarily when, at last, he began with tremendous difficulty to go away. He was already at the courtyard gate when she sobbed. He was gone — oh, it mattered not now what she did!

But Arisuga hearing this, of course, returned. His renewed presence only renewed the Lady Hoshi's tears.

"But what can I do?" he kept on asking politely.

"Stay!" cried the Lady Hoshi, madly, forgetting everything but that one wish.

"Oh!" said Arisuga.

"Gods!" breathed Isonna.

"Only till to-morrow; that is but one day; to-morrow, lord — lord of my soul!"

"Oh!" said Arisuga again, and, at once entirely willing, dismissed his 'rik'sha.

The next day he took her to the Forbidden

City and showed her the tragic, broken wonders of it, while he puzzled out that scene of the day before. There were times when he had to help her up on broken walls and over fallen sculptures. And more and more as he possessed her thus for one day he wanted to possess her indefinitely. For the hands were very soft, the eyes luminous, the small body where it touched his exquisite.

He found it hard to believe — that, like a courtezan, she would beg him to stay. Yet, it was for but one day! No woman of joy would stop there! At last he spoke: —

"Were you educated in Japan — or China, angel of my earth-heaven?" he asked of her.

"In China, lord, such things as a girl learns after three years, but in the Japanese way entirely."

There was little enlightenment in that.

"And have you known many men?"

"Yes," she answered at once, thinking that was what he wished.

"No!" cried Isonna.

The two girls turned together. Hoshiko was about to chastise the maid. But she was terrified at the pallor of her face. Neverthe-

less she insisted, with a certain pathetic dignity: —

"I said — yes!"

"I say no!" stubbornly cried the maid. "None! none!"

Arisuga deprecatingly waved his hand, and courteously believed what they disagreed about.

"What does it matter?" he said.

But the maid whispered tragically to her mistress: —

"See what you have done!"

"What?" asked Hoshiko.

The maid's whisper was sinister.

"Do you wish him to think that you have been any one's? Every one's? That is why he asked."

"It is not!" protested Hoshiko. "He asked to learn how many others love me."

"And why should he ask that?"

"Because *he* loves me," was Hoshiko's enigmatic answer.

There was no time at this moment for further explication. Arisuga had evidently decided something which was in his mind when he asked his first question, and Hoshiko fan-

cied that his decision was against her. For he laughed (not as she would have wished him to laugh), and took an almost rude and assured possession of her.

"When the mistress says yes and the maid says no, one must believe his eyes, which say it is improbable that so fair a flower has bloomed unseen even in this arid plain of China!"

"You think, then, that I *have* had — twenty lovers?" asked Hoshiko.

"Certainly," laughed Arisuga.

"No!" still cried the maid in her terror. "You believe, lord, that she has had none — not one — until you came!"

"Certainly," laughed the soldier again.

The two girls looked at each other dazedly. Arisuga laughed again in that unpleasant way.

"Now he will never know that I love him," chided the mistress, at an opportune moment. "If he had thought that I gave up twenty lovers the moment he came —"

The maid had not seen the value of creating such a situation. Hoshiko practised tremendous wisdom. She repeated to Isonna, in the

intervals of the day, the very things Isonna had taught her with great pains.

"A man will think nothing of you unless he knows that others do. If one has two lovers, one can easily have twenty. If one has one and is truthful — that is all one will ever have. If one has none, how is one to get even one unless she pretends to have many? For if no man cares for you, no man will. If many men care for you, many more will. If a man loves one and he sees that no one else does, he persuades himself that he does not. For he thinks that if no one else loves one, one is not worth loving. But if many love one, he persuades himself that he does, because if many love one it must be right and proper for him to do it. Now, you little beast, you must help, after putting him further off, to bring him nearer by making him think that he loves and desires me more than any of the twenty."

These philosophies of her own teaching, changed and informed with the aroma of Hoshiko, went far to convince Isonna.

"Sweet mistress," said the repentant servant, "the gods pardon me — and you — you also pardon me — if I have done wrong. But

this — this I will do — and swear it on the tablet of my father: If he should offer you marriage, I will go with you to some place where he can never know. I will keep your secret forever. Such things have happened. In another country the gods will not follow. Even to the country of some barbarian people, like America, I will go. What gods are there? Certainly none of our gods — such as know you and him. But I will *not* say that you have been the creature of twenty lovers!"

"But only to make him understand that he loves me — now — here — to-day? We have given him doubt! The rest does not matter."

Isonna was repentant but not helpful.

"Well — study — think — you little beast! And be more careful next time — then whisper it to me. How to make him understand!"

But there was no further communication from the maid.

In the evening Arisuga said: —

"If what I have been thinking all day — since the events of last night — is correct, and also meets your approval, I will take you."

And the little Lady Hoshi, shocked and stunned and shivering at her heart, answered: —

"Yes, lord."

And again that night she wept — not an hour — many hours. For you will have observed that Shijiro Arisuga did not say that he would marry — but only take her. (There is a difference in Japan.) And he did not ask her parents.

"You see, he knows!" she sobbed to the faithful maid. "Oh, it was so sweet — so sweet — that I forgot that I must not. And when I thought he loved me I was sure he would say 'I will marry you,' even if he did not mean it. But he only said, 'I will take you.' So — he does not love me — no! Well, Isonna, he shall have me. And I will enter his very soul! And then, some day, he will regret those awful words, and when he does I will die where he can see me afterward. You shall dress my hair in the shimada fashion, with flowers."

"He does *not* know," said the maid. "And he does love you. It is the result of telling him that you have had twenty lovers!"

"Ah, Isonna, do not make my sorrow heavier. That would be worse. He would not dare to say that to even me — if I were not what I am."

The maid still insisted.

"Then to-morrow I will tell him. If he would say that to a lady, who he thinks has dismissed many suitors for him, he shall know that he has said it to one who is not a lady and who has had no suitor but him alone."

"And one who has parents to be consulted! Not like one who goes to Geisha street without the leave of parents or uncles," advised the maid, with great severity.

"Yes," sobbed the girl. "Geisha street! Refuge of the forsaken! Oh, love exalts, as we do our parents. It does not demean. So, there is no love, no love! No matter what I am, however low, no matter what he is, however high, if he loved me he would ask my parents for leave to marry me — even if he only meant to take me. And I thought he loved me! Do you remember how, only a little while ago, I wished him only to know well that he loved me! Alas, he knows now that I love him, but he has told me odiously, odiously, that he does *not* love me! Yes, Isonna, he shall have me. Then I will die."

THE MAKING OF A GODDESS

XVI

THE MAKING OF A GODDESS

So she said the next day, not now with the aplomb of a lady, but as a servant: —

"Lord, there is a reason why you cannot — even —" she choked in her throat — "take me. Do you not know it?"

"Do not call me lord," he said, "as if you were a servant and I your master."

"It is right that I should do so, lord."

"I won't have it," he laughed.

And he had never seemed so beautiful nor the sound of his voice so tender. But she went on as she had planned in her sleepless night.

She was kneeling at his feet now — her head upon the mats — reaching out to touch him.

"Dear lord, I have deceived you," she said. "My only excuse is that it was sweet. All the sweetness I have had in my small life. Lord, I am young. But I had scarcely smiled until

you came. In Japan we were accursed. I was beautiful and my father pitied me and brought me here where no one knew. Lord, I am an eta."

Arisuga recoiled from the word. The instant would have been inappreciable to measures of time. But in it the girl's heart leaped and fell with its own understanding. In the same instant Arisuga knew all that had so puzzled him concerning the beautiful creature at his feet. And he understood what his saying must have been to her. For this he would make a soldier's great reparation — and at once! That was the way of Arisuga.

"Then you have known no one — no man but me?"

"No," whispered the girl. "I thought if I had twenty lovers, you would wish me the more."

"And what I have foolishly taken for the advances of experience have been innocencies!"

Not she, but Isonna, spoke out: —

"Yes, lord. It was as I said. I am here now, when men might wish her, to see that none approach. There has been no one but you."

"Little Lady Hoshi," said Shijiro Arisuga, to

her bruised heart, "there is but one reparation I can make for yesterday. It is to wish you to become my wife — to-day."

"But, lord, beautiful lord," cried the girl, "you did not hear what I said. I spoke too low. I was at your feet —" and now she deliberately raised her agonized face to his that there might be no mistake — "Lord, I am an eta! The accursed, despised caste! To the samurai we are as lepers! No samurai in all the thousands of years of our empire has ever married an eta! None has ever touched one! Lord, you did not hear!"

"I heard. Pray, call me lord no more, but husband."

"Li — li — Pardon me, husband, I have been taught that I am not to expect marriage."

"Who taught you that?"

"Even my father! My mother!"

"Gods! It shall be to-morrow."

"Yi — yes, li — li — husband," chattered Hoshiko.

"And on that day there shall be a new goddess to be worshipped, and her name shall be called Star-Dream! And the first prayer she shall hear will be from a very brutal soldier to

be forgiven for a little start upon hearing a certain untrue word. For no goddess can be an eta — even if it were possible for a mortal as beautiful as you to be an eta. So, even to-day, see," as he gathered her from the floor strongly into his arms, "you are my goddess — to-morrow you will be my wife."

"Lord, I have no wedding garments! You know that though a Japanese maiden has always ready her garments for death or marriage, an eta maid has only those for death ready. It is presumption to have — the — the others."

"Then there shall be no wedding garment but this," and he touched the dainty thing she wore. "Where are your parents that I may ask their consent?"

Hoshiko did not know. But Arisuga suspected that they were close behind the fusuma listening with staring eyes and gaping mouths.

He suddenly pushed aside the slides — and there they were.

"To-morrow I wed your daughter," he said to them with his soldier's savagery.

He respectfully gave them time for an answer — but he meant them to understand that they dare not refuse. And together, when they

had the breath for it, they bowed to the very earth and said: —

"Yea, august lord!"

Arisuga bowed haughtily in return, and closed the slides upon them.

"You see," he said to Hoshiko, "there is nothing but the three times three between us and our earth-heaven, goddess!"

"Yes, lord," she shivered.

She begged for delay, but he would not grant it, so all that night, while he slept near, she and Isonna in the next room strove to make a trousseau out of her shroud.

THE ETA

XVII

THE ETA

Now, even when Arisuga had spoken of marriage, he had the thought that it would probably not be longer than for his stay in China. At his going there would be a happy understanding that this meant divorce and that she might marry again. For he was bound by his oath to the great death, that she knew; and if this were to be all, it mattered little that Hoshiko was an eta. In China it was not heinous.

Yet even thus early the thought of some one else finding this wild flower when he was gone as he had found it — and, alas! of doing as he was about to do — he did not like that. He did not like his part in it. It haunted his dreams there in the room next to her and he woke.

She was sobbing. Then he heard her mother:

"Here is the sword," she said, in a voice hard as steel. "Be brave! First pray!"

"Yes," sobbed Hoshiko.

Arisuga crashed through the paper wall between them like the thunder-god. Before him was Hoshiko, preparing the sword for its work. About her, on the floor, was spread the pitiful evidence that she had tried to improvise a trousseau out of her funeral garments. There was a sheer white kimono of silk, the sleeves of which she had lengthened to the wedding size. (Death and marriage are both white in Japan.) She had just laid it down. It was with this— all useless now — that she had wrapped the sword. Above her stood her mother.

"What does this mean?" demanded Arisuga, taking the sword from Hoshiko.

"My mother wishes me to die," sobbed the girl.

"And you?" asked Arisuga, savagely.

"I wish to live. To marry you, lord."

"There are no wedding garments," said the mother.

"Nor any funeral garments now!" said Arisuga, slashing them with the sword.

"You wish my daughter for only a little while — then go!"

"That is my affair. I *take* her!"

"O Jizo," Hoshiko whispered within herself, "I thank you! Do not let your mercy stop! Perhaps — perhaps — O Benten!"

"You become an eta if you marry her," Hoshiko's mother was saying.

"In Japan," admitted Arisuga. "That is the way the unwise men of old worked to prevent the marriage of etas — and so blot out the caste. But this is China."

And now as the young soldier looked down upon the pitiful little heap at his side, a great shame rose in his soul that he had ever thought of marrying her for a little while, and, quite like Arisuga, he rushed in his penitence from one extreme to the other.

"By all the eight hundred thousand gods, I will marry her for all my lives!"

No adjuration, no promise, could be greater than that. Some men had sworn fealty to a woman for two lives — some for three or four — and it was said that once a man had sworn to love a great poetess for seven lives; but no one had ever yet, so it was said, sworn his love, much less marriage, for all his lives. Yet even this did not stop the savage mother of Hoshiko, bent upon her daughter's

honorable death rather than her dishonorable marriage.

"How will you assure me of this?" demanded she.

"By nothing but my word," said Shijiro, with all his samurai's haughtiness.

"Gods! Gods! How mighty and wise you are, lord!" sobbed Hoshiko, kissing his feet.

"But you will not be satisfied to live in China. You will take her to Japan, where both will be accursed etas," went on the implacable mother. "You are a soldier."

"I am a soldier," answered Shijiro Arisuga. "In the army there is neither eta nor samurai. All are equal. All are sons of the emperor. This is Yamato Damashii. The New Japan! And I am Shijiro Arisuga! That is the end!"

And it was the end. Here was a soldier who could vanquish the Medusa mother of Hoshiko by the cold process of words.

"Witnesses! Saké! I will not leave this lady again until she is my wife!"

And so terrible was this Shijiro Arisuga in his wrath that everything happened as he ordered — and they were married. I wish they might have lived happily ever after. But it was only

a few glad weeks. Yet, in those little days and hours, she did what she had threatened: crept into his heart so deeply that he was never to dislodge her quite until he died. And it was here Shijiro Arisuga thought for the second time, without suspicion to mar it, that the happiest moment of his life had come.

Fancy the joy of it all! Sure, I cannot tell it. I have no fit words. It was infinitely better than either had dreamed. The dainty little creature known as Hoshiko bloomed into splendor as Madame Shijiro — perhaps because she had no thought — absolutely none — for anything but him. And he was daily more and more amazed at the number of thoughts he spent upon her, who, he had once fancied, he could leave behind for some one else — for many others.

Indeed, it came to such a state that he had little thought for anything but her. The military death was forgotten — Yoné was.

"Now if we dream," he laughed to her one day, "take heed that we do not wake. For this dream is such as I have never dreamed before. In it are perfumes and melodies, caresses and touches, passions and calms, sleeps and wakings, and all delights."

"And you," laughed his wife, flinging herself upon him.

"And you," he laughed back, not putting her away.

"And that thing the foreigners call love."

"Grown larger in our sunny East than they know it in their chilly West!" added her husband.

TO THE EMPEROR

XVIII

TO THE EMPEROR

BUT the little paradise she had made for him there was one day invaded by two soldiers with some mysterious order, the command of which was that he must rejoin his regiment at once, though there was now no war.

"It is 'on to the emperor,'" laughed Arisuga, "and I must go. I had forgotten — thank *you!* Forgotten the emperor! The death!"

"Is it far to the emperor?" asked his little wife.

"Yes," sighed and laughed Arisuga, rubbing her cheek against his — you know they were of precisely the same height.

"And there is danger?"

"Oh, yes," said her husband, indifferently.

"If you should be killed, you will let me know at once?"

"Certainly, I will tell you myself," laughed he. "For what is that killing to this going away from you!"

"Oh — it is not so sad as waiting — waiting — waiting — for you to come again! Have I made you happy?"

"As a god," he said.

"Then, if you should not be killed — you will come back to be happy again?"

"Nothing but death shall keep me from you!"

"Swear — by your eyes — by your heart — by your soul — by your mother's, your father's memory!"

All of which he did — still laughing.

"What more, beloved one?"

"Only your own sweet word, my beautiful lord, that you will come back. Say this: 'Beloved who loves me more than the rest in Buddha's bosom, and whom I love as much —' That is true, is it not?"

"That is true," he laughed.

"'I will come back at the first moment of opportunity, if I live, to my — wife!'"

He repeated this after her.

"Now go! The waiting will be ecstasy. Go! The sooner you go, the sooner you will return. I am not afraid. I am your wife. You have said it. Here or there, in the earths or the heavens! For all your lives — all, all!

And I will be no other man's wife while I live! Or after death. And some day you shall have a son — like you in everything! — to keep the lamps alight when you are dead. For there will be for you a soldier's shrine. Now go or my heart will burst. And remember that in China or America or Germany I am your wife! But in Japan I am an eta — and you. Remember! Some day there will be a son, some day — *soon!*"

For if nothing else would bring him back, she thought this untrue promise would!

And so they parted — she pulling him back and pushing him off — there by the Sacred City he had helped to win — until she closed her eyes and clenched her hands and flung herself on the ground, face down, and would not touch or speak to him again. When he was out of sight she was sorry, and ran to the roof whence she could see the hills. There he was, walking between the two soldiers! And he turned because she so desperately wished him to — the gods made him do it, of this she was certain — and waved a hand to her; and with both of hers she sent after him all the blessings of the immortal gods.

"I will — I will be brave," she cried terribly to Isonna, who had said nothing. "I will be brave as he!"

"But how can we when all our life has gone yonder!"

And the maid sobbed in utter abandon.

"You love him too? You! Isonna, the savage, the eta, the man-hater! The declaimer against him, and me, and love! You! Oh, gods!"

"Yes," whined the maid.

"Come," cried her mistress, with tears and laughter. "He shall have two widows!"

She embraced her maid violently enough for bodily injury.

"Oh, is not the world beautiful!" cried Hoshiko. "I, who never hoped to be a wife at all, am the wife of a god. And he who had no thought of one goes yonder leaving two widows! Oh, girl brute, we are his wife for all his dear lives! Yes, we will be brave! We are a soldier's wife!"

ON MIYAGI FIELD

XIX

ON MIYAGI FIELD

BUT the mystery of his summoning was no more than this: One morning the regiment was aligned on Miyagi field, in parade uniforms, and in such a tremendous spirit as was never before known. Yet no one seemed to understand the purpose of it. And, there, at about the centre of all the glory, was Shijiro Arisuga himself, with his beloved colors once more above his head — the same that he had twice fallen and risen with! Pale he was, and ill-looking still. And the bandage on his head yet smelled of drugs — for this excitement was a bit too much for him after the quiet of China. Nevertheless it is not safe to let you fancy how happy little Arisuga was — nor how his heart thumped. You will be likely to fall short of the fact.

Now, far away on his right, came a glittering cavalcade, and the regiment began to sing with

the bands massed in his front: first, his own exultant song, then the Kimi Gayo — hoarsé, iron, terrible — announced the coming of the emperor of Japan. This gave way to acclaim, and, to the mongolian roll of on-coming "Banzais!" the emperor galloped down the line, with all his resplendent suite, and, by all the gods, stopped directly in front of Arisuga and faced the regiment! At that the singing stopped and the playing of the bands, and there was that silence before the sovereign which is more impressive than any acclaim. All the colors of the regiment were trooped in a little square before Arisuga into which the emperor rode — all the colors but his, whereat he wondered.

To his last day the little color-guard does not know precisely what happened after his name was called.

"Shijiro Arisuga, attention! Forward! To the emperor!"

Though choked with amazement, the little color-guard forgot nothing of his mechanical duty. At "Attention!" his flag went straighter, higher, his chest bulged, his legs grew stiff, and his hand flew to his visor. "Forward to the emperor!" and, almost uncon-

scious with his emotion, he yet stepped straightly forward until he stood directly in the Presence. He knew that before him was a white horse with very pink nostrils, which gently raised and lowered a hoof, now and then. That on the horse sat a grave, sad man, the plumes of whose kepi, as he looked kindly down upon the little color-guard, half veiled his eyes.

A bit of a smile grew there as his sovereign, for the first time, saw how small he was. Arisuga did not know the reason for that smile, but he felt it all through, and a tear started to his eyes. For you will remember that he was not meant for a soldier, but for simple and beautiful things.

Then Mutsuhito spoke to him.

"Shijiro Arisuga, the emperor is proud of such sons as you! Let him never regret his pride. It is upon you and such as you that the empire rests and must always rest. Be steadfast in your patriotism. No one in the army bears so great a responsibility as he who guards the colors. With them in sight my sons will follow anywhere — everywhere. When they are down, their guiding-star has set. For your flag is your whole country, all your ancestors,

your myriad gods, your emperor — your all! And every eye watches it! Twice in battle, you have raised your flag when it has fallen. The circumstances show great valor. Your emperor has a thousand eyes. He is everywhere, and always he knows and sees all the acts of his sons. He knows and has seen yours. And for them he decorates you with the order —"

Shijiro Arisuga's sick head drooped upon his breast and would hold no more. But presently he knew that the glittering cavalcade had wheeled and was out of sight, that the colors had returned to their places, that the regiment singing again his song was marching home, and that, for a very inadequate reason to him, he wore a medal over his heart and was nominated by the emperor himself Hero!

Well, that was all. But for the third time Shijiro Arisuga was certain that the happiest moment of his life had come — as well as that he had made a tremendous fool of himself. The tears rolled down his face all the way to the barracks.

But after that do you suppose he would ever let the flag go down? Do you suppose that he could love anything more than his

colors? Well, you are to judge at the end. For now this last obligation was added to that which first made him a soldier. And the gods, his ancestors, his father, the emperor, the world, looked always on!

Whatever we may think, it was true that this tremendous moment blotted out all others. Long ago he had forgotten Yoné. Now he forgot Hoshiko. He saw before him nothing but the sun-gilt path of glory. The emperor, the flag, the gods, the shades, his father's honor, were in his thoughts, and nothing of love.

THE FADED GLORY

XX

THE FADED GLORY

BUT presently the glory faded (alas! nothing fades more quickly than glory!) and Arisuga thought again of Hoshiko. Yet it was still good to be back among those whose trade like his own was war. And there were pretty words to listen to — which made the heart swell — and friends joyously to caress one, and others to recount one's courage — for at least two weeks: then all was as before, and Arisuga had only his medal as a surety that all the heroic splendor of Miyagi Field had ever been. It was then that he began not only to think of but to wish for Hoshiko — her hands — her voice — her laughter. In another week he would have given it all for these! And he had sworn to go back. But how could he — now? It was like open treason. Yea, so it is! Glory may fill our lives for a while, but presently it becomes smaller than a woman's steadfast love — as it

is smaller. Then he began to think of bringing Hoshiko to Japan. There was that theory, you will remember, that in the army there were neither samurai nor eta — only soldiers. Only sons of the emperor! Understand what that means — to be a son of the emperor. Yet no one but a Japanese can. Remember that the emperor is a god!

The yearning for Hoshiko grew upon him until he knew that he must do something definitive. Either she must come to him, or he must go to her, or he must forget her. Forget her! For three nights he strove to keep her out of his thoughts. When she came he would sing — shout madly. But she came quite easily through the songs. Then he cursed — everything which had conspired to bring about his unhappy status, pausing only before the emperor. She came smiling, seductive, through the curses.

Then he remembered the kindly face of the emperor and took a moment's hope. He would understand, and perhaps permit him to live in China. But when he told Zanzi his hope, that officer grew savage: —

"What! After the emperor has decorated you, touched you, you want — actually *want* —

to go away from him? Adopt another country? Sir, if he should know that you have such small purposes, I think he would recall your medal."

Then he thought it might be looked at differently, if they knew that he was married. Especially if they could see Hoshiko. Of course this was impossible, since she could not come to Japan. But he felt that, if he could interest his colonel in the facts, he could give him an adequate description of Hoshiko. No one, he thought, need know that she was an eta. Having secured so much, he would intimate that he had no intention of adopting another country, but that the air of China was necessary for his recovery; that the retrogression in his convalescence, which all noticed and spoke of, was because of the now unaccustomed air of Japan.

He told Colonel Zanzi tentatively, not that he was married — but that he wished to marry. Zanzi was opposed to marriage for soldiers.

"I am sorry," grinned the colonel, with a shrug. "Why must you marry? It is peace. Are the yoshiwara and Geisha street empty?"

"I have given my promise," said Arisuga.

"Oh, well," replied the colonel, with the air of dismissing a hopeless and useless topic, "if she is a samurai —"

"I have not inquired concerning that," said the color-bearer, untruthfully.

"But you must," said the officer, sharply.

"The old order is no more," quoted Arisuga against him. "I have heard you say yourself, Colonel Zanzi, that in the army there is neither eta nor samurai, — only sons of the emperor."

"In time of war, yes," finished the colonel. "We need them all then. But, these are times of peace. And the old order lives always. I have never said otherwise. You, sir, the son of a samurai who died at Jokoji, even if he died on the wrong side, ought not to need to be told that. Sir, no member of this regiment marries below his caste! If you are thinking of such a thing, I regret it. Your decision lies between this woman and the emperor, who gives you life, and who, when he accepts you as his son, takes back that life again to himself to dispose of at his will. You cannot have forgotten the samurai obligation, — not to live

under the same heavens nor to tread the same earth with the enemy of your lord. You must leave it, or the enemy must. This woman, sir, puts herself in opposition to your emperor. She is, therefore, his enemy, and consequently yours. Nevertheless the emperor is gracious. He leaves the choice to his sons. But they must take the consequences. Good morning, sir."

But the color-bearer did not move. He stood there still with his hand to his forehead.

"Good morning!" thundered the colonel.

And even that could not frighten him. He was momentously deciding between the emperor and Hoshiko.

"I desire to say, sir, that I shall not marry," said Arisuga.

"I am glad to hear it. The soldier who marries is a fool."

And therefore the little color-guard set himself to fight again, and to the end, against the invincible thing called love. It makes me smile as I think of it. Who has ever vanquished it? At first he stubbornly thought of other battles he had fought and won. But he

was surprised that this brought no courage to the new kind of conflict. She came in the visions of night, like the sappers and miners, when he was least defended against her, smiling, beckoning. He could see her and touch her, and know that she was at his side.

Now all things mightily conspired to make that thing he had once thought of in China — a temporary alliance, — a going away, an easy forgetting, another marriage, many — to be more fully than he could have hoped.

It was only necessary that he should remain in Japan. Time would do the rest. He used to wonder, in the night, under the stars, how long it would take her to understand, then forget, then to take another husband. He never got over this latter without waking his sleeping comrade by a certain wild violence of passion.

He thought of it with a pitying laugh at himself — now mad to go back where he was denied the going — to have her there who must not come — whose coming would be ruin.

One night he spoke wildly to this comrade: —

"I tell you that she will never forget, never take another: if she did, I would kill her!

But I am the liar and the scoundrel — I. She chose me." Concerning which interruptions of his repose his sleeping-mate continued to complain to headquarters.

A dozen times he sat down to write to her. But what comfort was that? It was herself he wanted: the bodily presence which could softly touch him, the voice which could gently speak to him, all the beauty which he might see! A dozen times he threw the unfinished letter from him.

And so, finally, this fight against Hoshiko became a rout. Every night, when he should have slept, it came on — like an enemy who knew the time and place of the weakness of his adversary. If there had only been no nights to fight through! At last his bunkmates so complained of him that the doctor sent him to live out of the barracks, where he would disturb no one. He had a small house to himself.

But in this new solitude she came and stayed and possessed him. She made him again to possess her. She was there always. The night mattered no more. He saw her eyes in the dusk, heard her voice in daylight. He often

parted the shoji — sometimes to find vacancy — when his mood was practical and he had slept well; but often when he had not eaten or slept, and the visions came — to have her swiftly in his arms.

Presently a certain infidelity came and lodged in him, and the knowledge of it spread through the army.

"What a spirit must that be of the emperor — the gods — the augustnesses — even a father waiting in the Meido — which would not permit him to have one small woman!"

That is what he publicly said. And, worse, he had once thought of throwing his medal into the moat near by and of escaping to China. Of deserting the emperor he had doubly sworn to serve. His gods, his father, the shades. Perhaps there was but one thing in the old days, worse than the eta — the deserter. He thought of this and took terrible pause.

Finally it was known in the army that Arisuga was mad — quite mad. The wound in his head had done it. His talk was of a woman: an houri, if ever there was one, should his talk of her be believed. He had cursed the

gods, reviled the augustnesses, the spirit of his father, the emperor who had pinned the medal on his coat. Certainly Shijiro Arisuga was mad. He himself heard this, and thought to take a cunning advantage of it. If he were mad, he would be invalided, and then he would see China again.

IN THE ANDON'S LIGHT

XXI

IN THE ANDON'S LIGHT

BUT one night there came a gentle tapping on his shoji — like the dream. He sat up and listened. There was more tapping — still like the dream. And then a whispered voice — not the dream — which woke him to mutiny: —

"Ani-San! Beloved! Do you no more wish me? Oh, it is so long — so long! And we have walked — walked — walked. I would rather know and die. At first I thought you dead — you said nothing but that should keep you from me — death! death! And I could not sleep — I never slept! At last I decided to come and get your body, steal it out of the grave, and take it back with me, where I might weep over it and make the offerings — only your dear, dead body I have loved and which has loved me — lain down by my side, held me in its arms! And so I came with Isonna — faithful Isonna is here — and

learned that you are not dead, and all the glory. O beloved! My soul swells with joy of you. You, mine, once mine, so glorious in the eyes of our country! For, oh, Ani-San, it is *my* country, too! They shall not take that from me, though it makes me an outcast. And my feet touch it now. My country! Nippon! Nippon! After all the evil years of exile. My emperor! My gods! Forgive me, beloved, but it must all come out of my heart, or it will burst. I know you are there. I know you listen! I see — touch — adore — your shadow. I have seen *you!* I have hid in the trees — Isonna and me — for three days, until we are very hungry and have begged rice. Three times — on each day — we have seen you. Three nights we have watched your dear shadow. Once it prayed and then rushed upon the outside and spoke loudly to the heavens — words which we could not hear. Were they of me? Were they hate or love? To-night I touch your shadow — put my lips upon it on the paper. For — yes — I know that is all I am ever to have: the shadow of you. You do not wish me! That is what my mother said; and laughed. She struck me and said her words

concerning you had all come true. Ah, pardon, lord. What matter that? It is three days! Three days! We could not die until the moon was dark; for some one, passing, might see and find our bodies. But I am glad for those three days. Now the moon is gone — the moon which sees our deeds and tells them to the gods of night; and, lord, only to-night, when the moon was gone, could I come to you to say farewell — Ani-San, to-night we die — Isonna and I. Unless you still wish me? No! Pardon that. But — if you should! Ah! if you should! Speak one word though it be Go! Only one word, that I may die in the blessed sound of your voice! Oh, it has been so lonely! For you first taught me how to be happy — to laugh, to love. And then you went, and took it all away — all, all away. Beloved, you do not wish us — No? so, to-night we die. We shall not harm you, even in our death. As long as this little paper wall is between us you are not contaminated even while we live. No one will know us in this far land; and we shall die where no one will ever find us; only the gods, only the pitying gods. So we do not harm you in coming

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here. We would not have come had we known you lived. Ani-San, it is finished — all quite finished; you wish me no more. I hear no blessed word. Lo! I listen — listen with my soul — but I hear no word! All the gods in all the skies bless you. All the gods in all the skies make you happy. All the gods in all the skies make you glorious. Ani-San, beloved, farewell, forever and forever, farewell!"

At first the little color-bearer put his hands madly to his ears; but not for long. Could you? And at the end he heard her sink slowly to the earth, slipping, sighing, down the shoji.

At that moment he would have had her if the empire itself had fallen for it. He did not wait to part the shoji. He plunged through them as he had done once before in China. And there at his feet was the pitiful little heap. Too numb she was to be wakened by his tumult.

He carried her within and laid her in the lamplight. The pretty face was ghastly with starvation. The feet were nearly bare, for walking had worn out her sandals. The kimono was one he knew. But it had been in the rain and had trailed many tired miles in the

dust. He did not need the light of the andon to tell him of her sufferings. Nor even her voice. And presently when she woke it was not of that she told. Indeed, of that she never spoke. It was all forgotten in that waking in his arms. And all she said — all she ever said of it — was to ask him, with a breath, if she dreamed.

She slept a little, then woke and said with terror: —

"Isonna!"

"Yes, beloved," answered Arisuga. "Where is she? You have slept sweetly."

"Has the clock struck?"

"The clock has struck."

"Then she is dead," whispered Hoshiko. "She was to die first — when the clock struck. And I was sleeping — sweetly, you said. Oh, gods! Go to the moat. I will pray."

At the moat there was nothing but some pebbles dislodged where small feet might have tracked. Some fresh soil was uncovered, where two large stones had been taken. One was gone, the other waited at the edge of the waters. And in this he knew how the manner of their death had been planned. Each was

to take a great stone in her small arms and wade into the moat until — At the piteous picture he who had seen death by thousands choked in his throat and followed Isonna into the water.

But it was too late — much too late. And so he left her there, where she had chosen to be, for him and for Hoshiko, quite at rest, with her burden still clasped strongly in her arms, and only a little prayer to Buddha — nembutsu — Isonna!

TADAIMA — TADAIMA!

XXII

TADAIMA — TADAIMA!

It was three days before she could smile. Then she said wanly: —

"What will you do with *me*, Ani-San? Must I die, too? You cannot go back to China with me."

"By all the gods in all the skies we shall part no more! We can die — yes — together — but part never!"

"Alas! that is all we can do now, beloved, for I have harmed you in coming here."

"You have brought me the happiness I do not deserve. I will never again put it in jeopardy."

But you are to understand that even that, dying together, perhaps, with her obi binding them close to each other, walking arm in arm, into the sea, or the moat, until they could but dimly know that the sun was yet in the heavens, on through the green water, more

and more dim unto darkness, peace, sleep — you are to understand that this, death with him, was next in its sweetness to life with him.

He meant to go to the colonel; but not yet. You remember how she raped those few days of happiness out of the very hand of fate in China. So now Arisuga said Tadaima! Wait!

For again his little wife had to have a trousseau, and she was yet very weak and tired. And on the way she had sold her pretty hair-pins for food — these had to be replaced. But so potent is happiness, that it was not three days more till all her loveliness had returned and bloomed again — just in time to be adorned by the new kimono of blue crêpe, and the new kanzashi of tortoise-shell and gold.

Still it was Tadaima!

For three days more Arisuga lived in his paradise and then went resolutely to the colonel.

"I am married," he said bluntly, with his salute.

"What?" roared the colonel.

"I was married when I was here before."

Finally the officer smiled. That is the way

he would have been likely to do it at the color-bearer's age.

"I remember that you said you did not mean to marry! You *were* married! Well, well, if she is a samurai —"

"She is an eta," said Arisuga. "That one in China."

"Ah! After a little while you can divorce her. No one need know of it."

"I beg your pardon."

"You will not?"

"I cannot."

"You understand your position the moment this becomes public?"

"You cannot make me an eta in the army. I am a soldier."

"You will ask for a furlough. Time indefinite upon recall. It will be granted," said Zanzi, coldly.

This was the color-bearer's dismissal from the regiment. For a moment he could not speak.

"You are too ill for service," continued the colonel, less coldly. "If, however, you should think it best to take my advice, let me know of your recovery."

"I thank you, sir," said Arisuga, chokingly,

"it is impossible. The flag — my flag — ?" he begged.

"Good morning," said the officer; "I will find some one for the flag."

But, after he was gone the colonel determined to see what manner of woman this was who could make Arisuga give up his flag. Orojii had said, in China, that she was pretty! He pictured her an Amazon, with tremendous force, and painted cheeks, who had enslaved the little color-bearer, and he meant to exhibit his authority against hers and save Arisuga from her.

"It is always so," he was thinking as he arrived at the little house, in some haste to be ahead of Arisuga, "a little fellow like Shijiro is sure to choose some woman twice his size for a wife, and to be under her thumb ever after."

You may fancy, therefore, his surprise, when a little flower of a maiden pushed aside the door for him, and, to his question, announced that she was Shijiro's wife. For a moment the colonel did not speak. Tremendous readjustment was necessary. In the meantime she had led him within.

"Sit down," she said. "I will bring you some

tea. My husband will be here very soon. He has gone to see his colonel. Alas! you must sit on the floor in the Japanese fashion. We have none of the new foreign chairs!"

In an instant she had the tea before him.

"I do not care for tea," said the soldier. "I am Colonel Zanzi."

"His colonel!" gasped the little wife. "And — and — you have come to be —"

"As kind to you as I can be," said the soldier, hastily. "Be at peace!"

"Oh! Is it true?" The tears ran over her eyes at once. "You know? And yet you will be kind? Oh, Jizo — that is my favorite goddess — look upon you! But you will smoke a little? See, here is my own pipe." She cleansed it and filled it and put it to his lips, and he who smoked only cigars smoked Hoshi's little metal pipe. "And he is not disgraced? I have not ruined him? No! Or you would not be here smoking my pipe. You would be savage. You would wish to kill me. Oh, I know he is the emperor's and you, also, even me! I know how that is. Everything for the emperor! Wives! Children! Even parents! Why, was it not Akima Chinori who killed his

child, which was too small to be left alone, so that he might obey the call? 'I have given you life,' so says the imperial call, 'now give it back to me.' But I will not harm him. I will help him to be a soldier. Oh, I am brave! You cannot think how brave. It is only waiting, waiting, waiting, that I cannot endure. Do you know that we were married away down there? And that Arisuga-Sama left me to go to the emperor? Did you know that? And that it was I came to him? He did not bring me. I meant to die here without harm to him. But only Isonna died. He is not to blame."

"Who was Isonna?" asked the soldier.

"She was my little maid. She was to die first when the clock struck, die there in the moat — then I. But first I came to see his shadow on the shoji — touch it. Say farewell. To hear a word, if there were one. I am afraid I wept, fainted with hunger, and he heard me and took me in and kept me. He *did* wish me! He *did!* But Isonna was dead. Yes, while I slept in his arms! Dead for us. The tea is very good, excellency?"

And because she put it into his hands with that fear in her great eyes, and because of

that shaking of the little hand, and that chattering story in the quavering voice, and those tears, he drank the tea, who drank only hot brandy.

"Do you mean to say that Isonna killed herself so that — so that —"

Even the grizzled soldier choked at the thought.

"So that no disgrace might come to him. And I — I, also, should have died — before he knew. Then he would not have been harmed. As long as the thin paper was between us he was safe — safe as if I were yet in China. But you do not know how sweet that was — to sleep in his arms, to wake in his arms — with the words he spoke that night he married me again in my ears? But while I slept the clock struck. Ah, you know him only as a soldier! I know him as a lover! A husband! A god!"

Still this soldier, brought up to the religion of sacrifice, thought of the serving-woman sacrificially dead there in the moat.

"Was Isonna an eta, too?"

"She was an eta, too," said Hoshiko.

"Gods! And we think you lack spirit — courage — devotion!"

"No! We are brave!" she said piteously. "We are as ready as you to die for the emperor! If you will only learn to let us!"

"I believe you!" said Zanzi.

"Shall I tell you?" she begged. "He is not at fault. Let me plead for him!"

"Yes, tell me," he said.

But she could only repeat the old story:—

"We came because we thought he was dead — he said that only death should keep him from us — to take his body back with us — only his dear, dead body. That would have been no disgrace. For the Lord Buddha does not permit any one to disgrace the dead who cannot help themselves. But when we knew that he was alive, we knew also that, by coming to Japan, we had harmed him. Then we meant to die without him knowing, keeping always the thin wall between us. Where no one could find us after. But I could not without one word of farewell to his shadow — only his shadow! And one word from him — if there was one. That would not harm him. Oh, yes, I knew that I must not touch his body in Japan! But his shadow! Was that harm? And one word? Would not you have

touched his shadow? And he *did* wish me — he *did!* And then — I woke in his arms!

"But the clock had struck while I slept. Eight. And that was the signal for Isonna to take a stone in her arms and walk into the moat. And Isonna was faithful. For there he found her afterward, asleep, with the gods, the great stone in her arms. And that one I was to take is still there, on the edge of the moat, waiting. But now I cannot die. He has made my life sweet again. Would you die with life all sweet again, as the morning glories in the morning? So the stone must wait there. Perhaps he and I shall carry it together. For, so he says, we shall die, together, rather than part again."

"You shall not part. Would you like to go to America?" asked the officer.

"No. Nowhere but here."

For America to her was the country of the barbarians — a horrid waste, where no flowers grew.

"But if your husband should go there?"

"Yes!"

It did not matter then.

The colonel rose.

"Tell him to come to see me again."

"And you will be as kind to him as you have been to me?"

"No," smiled the colonel. "He doesn't deserve it. He doesn't deserve you." But, then, seeing that she did not quite understand his pleasantry, he added: "I shall be as kind to him as I can be, as I am permitted to be, for your sake. And you are to tell him that!"

"Shaka, and all the augustnesses bless you!"

He held the tiny hands a moment at parting.

"Once I knew a little lady like you. It was long ago, and there is a tomb for her in Asakusa. Perhaps she was *not* like you, not as lovely. But so it seems now — after the years. If she had not died, I would not have been a soldier."

And no one had ever heard the grizzled colonel's voice so soft.

She sent Arisuga back. But she did not tell him that.

THE PITY OF THE GODS

XXIII

THE PITY OF THE GODS

THERE seemed little kindness in Colonel Zanzi's greeting when Arisuga arrived. He did not even look up.

"You will be transferred to a Hakodate regiment," he said in a monotone; "they are ruffians, but good soldiers. You will report to your new regiment when you are recalled. Your furlough must be spent in America and in communication with headquarters."

This was exile, but mitigated by every possible circumstance.

"Sir," said Arisuga, with emotion, "I do not deserve this consideration."

"No," answered his colonel; "but your wife does."

Have I let you suppose that Hoshiko accepted all this perilous happiness without question? No Japanese woman ever does that. It is true that, at first, there was no thought —

there could be none. The gods had put them both suddenly into a position from which they could not retreat. But after that, when thought came, and Hoshiko knew that it had all been for her, and how much it was that he had given — then she began to prepare her recompense. To you it would have been a strange one, but it was not so to her. What she had taken beyond her share from the universal happiness, that she would balance with such suffering as came.

What she had taken from him, the shade of his father, that she would restore. What he stood in danger of losing because of her, that she would insure against loss. And the gods would help her. For they always heeded such constant and faithful praying as she meant to render. At last she knew that they would. For they sent her a sign. But before I speak of that I must go on and make plain what her purpose came finally to be. Nothing less than to make sure in some way (she waited on the gods to make the way plain to her) that since she prevented Shijiro from dying for his emperor in his father's stead, his reparation should come about

in some other way — perhaps some way not thought of as yet — even by the gods. All she could do now was to pray that if he should die the small white death, the gods would send *her* some sort of reincarnation in which *she* might accomplish his purpose, though he were dead. And of course, whether she survived him or not, this was possible, to the immortal gods. But I think she had no idea that she — she herself — might herself be the instrument — that the gods meant anything as strange and startling as that — nor that her reincarnation might be in the very form of her husband while she yet lived. She would not be likely to think of precisely that. Until that day of the sign from heaven itself — that day while they were playing as children might do on the mats. Their feet were against the groove which held the fusuma. The little soldier reached upward above his head.

"I can touch the other mat," laughed Arisuga.

"And I," laughed his wife, doing the same.

"What!" cried the soldier. "I am taller than you are."

Then Hoshiko understood that she ought not to have said that. It was heinous to make herself the equal of her lord in anything.

"No, lord," she hastened to say, "I lied — a little lie — while we sported. I am sorry."

"It is no lie," laughed happy Arisuga once more; for you will remember that all her daintiness was then his, and that he was not like other Japanese husbands; "we are exactly the same height."

"No, no, no, lord," pleaded Hoshiko, who fearfully knew that it was so, "you are much taller than miserable small me."

And, to prove it, she bent her knees within her kimono and stood beside him, for he had risen to prove the matter.

But he detected the bent knees and straightened them, and, lo! there was not a shadow of difference in their height.

And when the little soldier laughed and was very happy about it, she laughed too, timorously at first, then more joyously than he. For to be his equal in something, and to see him happy about it — well, she supposed that no Japanese girl had ever before such felicity, and perhaps she was right.

So, in their playing and laughter, he cried:

"And I shall be punished for my haughty spirit in thinking I was, and you shall be

rewarded for the humility of yours in thinking you were not."

And the manner of this punishment and reward was for him to strip off her kimono and put it on himself, and his uniform and put it on her. Oh, you may be sure that she tried to fly in her terror of him, that she fought and wept and at last utterly exhausted had to let him have his way — even to tucking her splendid hair under his military cap. She lay there happily crushed and disgraced until he had made himself so like her that she hardly knew him.

But she would not see herself until he brought the mirror and told her that he was looking at himself. Then she looked, and it was true. With staring eyes she stood upon her feet and passed the mirror up and down.

Then suddenly she saw the smiling face of a god in the mirror also, and knew that this was to be the fashion of the reincarnation she had begged of the gods.

She whispered her husband to look into the mirror.

"There is the face of a god there!"

Arisuga looked and laughed, but saw no god.

"It is the reflection of your Jizo," he said, pointing to the goddess behind her.

But Hoshiko said it was not that. For, you see, she knew what it was, and her husband did not — and must not — the sign.

Now after that Shijiro Arisuga was amazed, considering the terrors out of which it had first been accomplished, to find his little wife often in his uniform. And more, to learn that this gentle creature was mad for the learning which is a soldier's. Of course it was great sport in this happy time, and Arisuga taught her all he knew! — how to stand and step and march, to load and fire and intrench herself, and all the hoarse songs and sayings of the army — among others that battle song of his. But most of all he taught her how to carry the sun-flag, and how to keep it, nay, how to retake it if it should be captured — which, however, he instructed her, illogically, must never happen.

"Our method of advance," he told her, "is never in thick fat lines — such delectable food for the shrapnel. One at a time we run to a position we have fixed in advance. Then we dig. Sometimes there are as many as five all scattered — never more. After digging holes we make

another rapid advance and do the same, and then, again, until there are three chains of holes parallel to the enemy. Then other troops advance. They have the first holes to hide in. They make them deeper and wider and advance as we did until we have a solid line out near the enemy, the holes being joined to form a trench. And by that time there are two such trenches to our rear for those who support us — or to retire to —"

Here he laughed, and added impressively: —

"If that should ever become necessary. But a Japanese soldier goes only in one direction — forward where the flag is. And as to the flag," he went on, "that goes forward with the first advance, like this —"

He rolled it into a ball.

"But, once it is there, the lines formed, the advance ordered, it is raised, like this, so that the artillery know where we are when they fire at the enemy. So," he laughed happily, "when you take my flag forward, you will go like this —"

He made her run with bent supple back the length of the apartment.

"Drop like this; now there is nothing but

a small lump of earth to see; dig like this, lying on the flag, and so on till, out there, in the first trench, you raise it never to return with it. Then you will hear the bursting of the gates of all the hells. For our enemies are stupid and never understand, until they see the flag, what our purpose is, then they waste their ammunition and we *use* ours. But then it is too late for them and it is ours only to go forward and defeat them, led by the sun-flag."

There was nothing of this which the girl did not treasure up. And Arisuga laughed, she laughed, and he never asked or wondered why.

THE LAND OF THE BRAVE

XXIV

THE LAND OF THE BRAVE

So, presently, they were in America. On the way over they were quite happy once more.

"For there are no etas in America," said Hoshiko.

But there *was* the Japan Society in America, which turned its back on them, etas, whereby they were left in a strange land, with only a strange language and half pay, all of which would have been beggarly enough.

However, that is how it happened that Moncure Jones, who had made a sudden fortune and wanted a Japanese butler, became the happy master of Arisuga. He had found them in one of his "raids" upon southern New York, where they had a little room and were starving and studying the language.

Arisuga told his small wife one day that the thing called divorce was going on in the Jones household and in the courts. They laughed

together about it. Divorce in America meant something very different from what it did in their country. It appeared that it had been preceded by tremendous quarrels in the house of Jones, of which Arisuga was a witness, and an amazed one. For Mrs. Jones had rather the better of the quarrelling.

"It is not certain that the divorce will be granted by the judges," said Arisuga.

"Do they make people live together who do not wish to?" asked his wife.

"So it seems," laughed Shijiro.

From day to day Arisuga went with Jones to the courts to testify of the quarrelling. Then one day he told Hoshiko that the divorce would be granted because of the cruel and barbarous treatment of Jones by his wife. But even then the court was many months in doing what would have been executed in a few minutes in their country.

Finally the decree was perfect and Jones needed a housekeeper. He asked Arisuga if he knew of one as efficient as he was. He spoke to Hoshiko. An income was more and more needed to provide the money for his return when his summons should come. For it had

surprised them, in the auriferous American country, how their expenditures grew and their income failed.

Well, it pleased Hoshiko: for there would be only so much more time in her husband's company. Shijiro's time spent with Jones had grown much more than the time spent with her. Indeed, it was here where the rift began to show in the little lute of their joy. For Shijiro also learned some habits in America, save for which they would have had a fair start on their fund for the return: he gambled.

Jones, it seemed, was vexed with ennui. To teach Arisuga how to gamble, and even to let him win, gave him both employment and amusement. Indeed, with his little winnings, Arisuga began to feel opulent. He put away, now and then, something for his return, and was more often in good humor. And as he was happy, so was Hoshiko. For she always reflected only him. Her one great unhappiness was that he was so constantly away from her, and more and more so as the time went on, so that often he forgot to come home to her for several days. Then he would explain that he with Jones had been on a gambling tour.

So the little unhappiness which had threatened her life fled quite away the moment she knew that Jones wanted an honorary housekeeper. In her innocence she did not reason why he might want to set up such an establishment. Nor did Shijiro.

JONES

XXV

JONES

JONES! He had watery gray eyes and thick lips. He stooped a trifle and was not so shockingly firm in his gait as most Americans are. Yet he would smile betimes, and then his mouth seemed armed with yellow fangs.

"Like the dragon on Hanayama," breathed Hoshiko, shivering herself into Arisuga's arms the night after she had gone for inspection. "He smiled at me."

"A smile is good," said Arisuga.

"You did not see that smile! It was not good!"

"Hereafter I shall watch it," laughed Shijiro.

For Jones's maiyi, or "look-at-meeting," as they called it in their own language, Hoshiko had dressed her hair anew, put her best kanzashi into it, brought out that worn but still beautiful kimono in which she had been married, full still of the flower perfume of her maiden-

hood, put her feet into the tall, ceremonious geta of her own land, and so went, quite in oriental state (Shijiro would have it so), in a hansom to Mr. Moncure Jones. No wonder he stared and put on his glasses. In all his sordid life Jones had not had so fresh a sensation as this. In all his life he had seen no creature at once so dainty and fragile and splendid.

When they were home again, came that shuddering of which I have spoken. And since Hoshiko did not at once take to his plan, but shuddered anew whenever it was mentioned, Arisuga let her wait, putting Jones off, until he could convince her rather than command her. For more than ever it, presently, became necessary for her to go to Jones. Now, strangely, since that day of the look-at-meeting Arisuga did not often win. On the contrary Jones did, until there was not only nothing for the passage being put aside, but a huge debt which appalled Arisuga. So that, in the end, the only argument he used to Hoshiko was of Jones's wealth.

"I shall win yet — Jones-Sama says so — all I have lost and more in one great stake. It is always so, therefore it is lucky to lose. I am not downcast."

"But, O beloved, that smile!" pleaded the girl.

"Nevertheless Jones is rich," said Arisuga.

"Yet a dragon!" cried the girl.

"And I kill dragons which frighten little wives," laughed her husband, without fear. "Besides," he said, "it is well to remember that otherwise we shall not have the money for the passage when my call comes! You will go? Yes, you will go. Let us make a friend of this Jones."

Suddenly Hoshiko saw the hand of the gods in this, also, and went to Jones. Was not this a part of the way she had prayed to be shown? And she had impiously rebelled! Because of her rebellion she went with a certain alacrity.

Jones smiled often at Hoshiko. So often that Arisuga could not but notice it.

"The yellow dragon of Hanayama covets the dove of Arisuga," he laughed. "Yet doves are not good for dragons. This will be better."

He handed her the small toilet sword which Japanese women carry.

"I have heard," said Jones to Shijiro one day, "that Japanese husbands often rent their wives to pay their debts."

"That is true, lord," bowed his little butler.

"For a year, don't you know, or six months, or something like that?"

"It is true, lord," repeated the butler.

"And that the wives really like it?"

"True, lord," answered Arisuga.

"They don't lose caste after the — er — debt has been paid, but go back to their husbands?"

"True, lord."

"Well, that's a pretty sensible arrangement. You Jap chaps are always sensible; and" — the yellow fangs came out — "I am your creditor for a couple of thousand dollars. Arisuga, I am willing to be so paid and to pay you a couple more thousand than you owe me! Then your passage will be safe. I don't believe, now, it will be otherwise. I have got you in too deep a hole."

Jones laughed hoarsely at his own cunning.

Arisuga received the suggestion as he would have received an unimportant business proposition.

"I will consider and let the enlightened eijinsan know," he said. This, also, as if it were the mere oriental courtesy of bargaining — the sloth which is polite.

"I guess it will be all right," laughed Jones. "Take your time. No one is proof against the blandishments of American gold. Even oriental virtue yields to it. Don't you think it will be all right?" — a bit anxiously.

"Let the honorable American lord so think," said Arisuga. "I will consider."

"I shan't be niggardly, understand. If you are not satisfied with a couple of thousands, we'll make it a quartette. She is about the dearest little morsel I have ever seen."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Arisuga, with American politeness, this time.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jones.

And Hoshiko, taking her cue, laughed too, out of the palest face she had ever had. For she was present — though she was not thought to know English enough to understand what was said.

But that night Jones was awakened by something strange at his throat. It was a steel blade — and an ominous Arisuga. In one hand he had a candle. In the other Hoshiko's sharp little sword — close against his skin.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Arisuga.

Jones was in no laughing mood.

"Laugh!" said Arisuga.

Then Jones brought forth a sickly cachinnation which stopped at the first note; for it made the sword to penetrate his skin.

"Lie still — quite still!" admonished the Japanese, with deadly quiet, and Jones did not move a muscle for a moment, which seemed years.

Then the light went out and Jones expected death. But nothing happened. He waited long. The sweat poured out until his bed was wet. He was certain that he felt that blade still at his throat — and the little stream of blood from it. But there was no more. He was not dead. At last he cautiously put his hand out. It encountered nothing. Then he raised it to his throat. Nothing was there. He leaped out of bed on the other side. Nothing further happened. He did not even call for the police.

So the opportunity which Jones had seemed to offer for preparation to return to Japan when the call came vanished, leaving only the vain thing he had taught Arisuga — his little skill at cards. This he still tried to use. But though he sometimes won he more often lost.

Yet he played on, certain of the great luck which would not only recoup all in one night, but establish his circumstances far beyond what they had ever been. It was the old, old gambler's lust. It was the old, old consequence. Luck seemed cruelly delayed, and they fell into desperate poverty.

And, worse than all, this — the gambler's fetish — was now the thing which possessed him. But though he loved the life of chance for itself, he never lost sight of the more and more frenzied necessity of providing for his return. For, rumors of war began to hover in the air. Hoshiko saw less and less of him. And he often forgot her for days together. If he were mad, for another reason, in Japan, he was mad equally in America.

Yet nothing was saved; always such pittances as he could raise, or she, were spent upon the small gambling devices in which the city abounded, no matter whether he had food or not. Presently his life was that and no more: a vain search for luck. But miserable as it was, there was hope in it, and a certain exhilaration. He was like one who has no doubt of ultimate good fortune, and wakes

daily with the uplifting thought that this may be the grateful day. And his hope and happiness in it brought hope and happiness, in the brief whiles it reigned, to Hoshiko, where happiness came of late not often. Nor hope.

THE "TSAREVITCH"

XXVI

THE "TSAREVITCH"

So the little exiles lived and starved, and feasted and loved on; happy sometimes, sorrowing more often, while Japan was yet at peace.

Always Arisuga kept his address at headquarters, and always he waited — listened almost — for the call. But it was long — very long. And his face grew sharp and his eyes narrow. And more and more in the waiting and listening he forgot, in America, Hoshiko — his Eastern Dream-of-a-Star.

For, presently, it was nearly ten years of this exile. Ten years of prayer which grew only more fervid as the years doubled upon themselves, and the hope so long deferred made the heart of Arisuga ill. Ten years of yearning for their own country, which fate denied them and which nothing but war could again give to them! The heart

of Hoshiko sickened, too. But it was thus because Arisuga more and more often forgot her rather than with the homesickness which she suffered as he did. Yet she guiltily knew that while there was no war she might keep him, even though he forgot her. So it was he alone at last who prayed for war. It was sacrilege to obstruct the gods; it was impossible to pray to be kept from her own perfumed land, so — she stubbornly prayed not at all.

And then it did come: the great war — though not as he had fancied it would. Slowly it got into the air. Every day he spent at the bulletins. But they said Japan would not fight. Russia was getting and would get what she wished. She was too great for Japan. And some of the newspapers began to pour contempt upon his country. She was baying the moon, one said.

"What! are there no more samurai in Japan?" Arisuga cried out to his wife that night. She did not reply. Her silence was almost guilt. For as the threat of war went on, and as Arisuga grew older, he valued the more what he had lost for her. "Gods," he proceeded

with a hollow laugh, "I am not a samurai myself. And I must wait my call to be even allowed to fight."

"Forgive me, dear lord," said his wife. And the words and her attitude recalled that other time she was servilely at his feet.

"Rise!" he commanded impatiently. "And do not call me lord. I am no more — nothing more — than you — eta! It cannot be helped. We must suffer it." But there were no caresses — there were never any now.

Then it came, quite according to Arisuga's fancy — a thunder-clap from the heavens! Togo had sunk the "Tsarevitch"!

"At last," cried Arisuga, that day, "I am a soldier once more, if not a samurai! A son of the emperor! Banzai!" And that night it seemed as if all the old sweetness had come back and she slept in his arms as she had used to sleep.

"All that remains now is the call," he said the next day, still happy.

He went to the consulate to see that they had his address correctly, but on the way home he remembered that there was no money for the passage. For, strangely, this passion of

war had obliterated that other passion of chance! He ran all the way.

"I must — I must," he said roughly to Hoshiko, "have money for the passage! When my call comes I shall not be ready. And there is none!"

"I have not forgotten it, lord," she answered, giving him the little she had been secretly able to save from his gambling for the purpose.

Arisuga counted it. He did not even stop to thank her for this unexpected sacrifice and munificence.

"Gods! It is not one-tenth," he accused. "We must have more at once. Jones liked you. Why not?"

"Yes, lord," said Hoshiko, growing pale.

"Remember the wives of the forty-seven ronins. They gave themselves to harlotry for their husbands' cause."

"Yes, lord, to-morrow," answered the trembling little woman. And though each day there was a little more money, she did not go to Moncure Jones. She could not. Some things are impossible!

All day she was gone, and he thought her there, with the yellow-fanged dragon, and did

not care! Nothing had hurt her heart so much as that. Each night she came back to him with her pitiful wage in her sleeve. Arisuga might have thought this strange had he not ceased all thought of her — that Jones permitted her to come home to him each night with each day's wages. And he might have noticed, if he had still adored the hands of satin, that they were stained: now with red, now with blue, yellow, green. But he never touched the hands any more, and was become impatient when they touched him void of money. But the little wage, the sixty or seventy cents which he seized eagerly and put away — you will want to know how she got them.

Try, then, to fancy as she did that this was the beginning of her punishment for the happiness of being his wife. To stay away from the chance of being with him, from early morning until late night. To watch the slow-going clock; the shadows as they crept up the wall to the red stain first, then the blue, then that pale yellow one, scarcely to be seen at seven o'clock; and then still (for her wish always outran the shadow) to wait until the clock in the cathedral

struck before she might stop making muslin flowers "for the happy occasions" and go wanly home to unhappiness. She was a flower-maker — this flower of another land made flowers for weddings, christenings, festivals, soiling them only, now and then, with a tear. Yet no one had ever made prettier flowers "for the happy occasions" than she who had, now, no happy occasions.

But the war went on, on, and he was not called.

"Gods! — yes!" he cried to her in his madness. "I understand. I am an eta! The damned word has passed all through the army. It stands opposite my name. It makes all my oaths, all my obligations before the gods, naught. There is but one hope. They will not call me unless the last man must be put into the field. Then — *then* they will take the eta. Gods of the skies! Gods of the earth! Gods of the seas and caverns below — let it be so! Let my country be among the dregs at the bottom of the cup of the nations' despair! I — I, Shijiro Arisuga, will bring it — lead it — to victory with my flag! I! For my father's ghosts will fight with me.

That is what we need! The ghosts of our ancestors! Who can vanquish them? And, O ye augustnesses, —" he addressed the spirits of his own ancestors, — "bring it about! For ye — ye alone can vanquish this upstart foe. And ye must — ye *must* permit me to make for my father the red death! Ye must — ye must."

Do you not see that he was gone quite mad?

Yet every insane word was a stabbing accusation upon the soul of Hoshiko, for whom it had all been. And she fancied that she was no more worth the sacrifice than was one of the morning-glories which were now only a memory. For she was now as pale, as sad, as evanescent and fleeting, as they: those morning-glories in their garden in happy China, unto whose beauty in the dewy morning she had once been wont to liken her life with this mad Arisuga. Unto whose beauty he had used to liken her!

THE SMALL WHITE DEATH

XXVII

THE SMALL WHITE DEATH

He was not called. The war went terribly on. The bewildered giant was buffeted, dismembered, at will by the shy pygmy. All about Shijiro fell the pink tickets, everywhere he met his mad, happy countrymen hurrying to the seaports, looking askance, but nothing came to him. Perhaps it was this. Perhaps it was too much work, exposure, and anxiety. Perhaps too little food. Perhaps all of these together. But presently he was in an hospital with his temperature at a hundred and five. Hoshiko was there always. And sometimes he forgot the harshness of his later life and fancied that it was again that day he first saw her by the Forbidden City. So he would live again through all that happy life until he came to the battle — whence he always came. Often in his fancy he was in the very presence of that glorious death

he had sworn to die. Then Hoshiko was forgotten again. And presently she went out of his sick mind as she had long since gone out of his shattered life, and nothing but battle lived there. She did not strive to recall herself by so much as a touch. So the gods wished it to be; this was their will. She had entered upon her eternal penance for happiness, and she did not again question its time or place or form. The happiness was gone. It could return no more. But with the sense that she had impiously raped her joy from the heavens themselves came the exultation that not even the gods could ever take that from her. It had been. She had had it.

He knew, one day, in a sane moment, that he was not leading armies to battle and himself to the great crimson death, but with an immense horror that he was confined within four deadly white walls, upon a narrow cot, not the damp, blood-stricken earth. That there were no belching cannons in front of him, no hell of hoarse shouts behind him, no curses and death-groans about him, but quiet, terrible, maddening, only the still, small white death of women and children.

He leaped up to fly from it and made this small death all the more sure. No prayers to his father, none to the augustnesses, none to the myriad gods availed. There he saw the still small white death of women closing down upon him while he lay inert, bound to his bed.

"This is my punishment," he whispered to her in anathema; "this is my punishment for taking you and forgetting him. Yes, even the gate of the Meido will be closed on me. I am not fit to meet my father. He must still wait. And for whom? There is only I! Only I can redeem him! And I must first descend — and cleanse my sinning face in the waters — the hot, hot waters of the hells! And when, after many lives, I meet my father —"

His mind could not endure the horror of this. But he turned his fury upon her.

"For you," he cried, "such a thing as you! Eta, jigoku onna! Hell woman! Yes, you came to me in the form of a goddess. But the hell woman does that. And now that death is here my vision sees through that and you are a skeleton with talons — with a beak — with hell's hollow laughter — the devils sent

you to tempt me and I fell — and am lost — my father's soul is lost — and you laugh —"

Alas! she did not laugh — she sobbed. For that was one of the days when the flesh was weak.

"Yes," she said, "I tempted you; I am all you say!"

He fell into coma then and remembered no more: leaving her here on earth with those fearful words in her heart to remember which had loved him only too well. Sometimes she half believed them. Once she crept from his side to look in the glass. She saw no talons or beak, but a wanness which, indeed, suggested a skeleton.

He knew, before his wits left him, that the objective of the Guards was the Yalu. And now he fancied himself gloriously leading them. But half-sane moments came in which he would again suspect the four white walls.

"Gods!" he whispered hoarsely, in one of these, "am I going to the small white death of women and children? Have I only dreamed that I was still leading them?"

"No," said his wife. "This is the dream — these white walls. You are to die the great red death. God has told me."

"Is it so?"

He gazed distractedly about and still thought he saw the walls.

"It is as I say."

He gripped her hands.

"By all the gods?"

"By all the gods," she swore.

Then, again, for the last time, came full delirium — and again it came in red.

"You have told me true!" he shouted. "There the devils come! On, on, on! Banzai! On! Nippon Denji! On! Ah, my sword slips at the handle — it is red! And the staff of my flag, too! A little earth!" He rubbed his palms on the bed covers as if they were the ground, and clenched his hands again. "Ah, now we are on them! Mutsushima! Up, up, up! Too early to die! You have not killed enough! Up, Banzai! The gods will not redeem your samurai vow with so few dead enemies of the emperor to your credit!" Then he must have been struck. "Father! Father!" he cried, and held out his hands.

After that he lay as one dead for a long time, then woke with slow doubt to find himself still without the heavens.

"I have not killed enough. That is it. There must be many more before I can see my father's face. Many more because — because I married an eta — yes, an eta seduced me. Did you know her? She was a hell woman. She kept me from my father. Did you know her?"

He stared up at her with half recollection, and then went on to his battles.

In one of them he lost his colors. No one has ever suffered a sharper agony than he — until they were retaken.

"But — the flag! The flag! I am hit! Here! Not much! Gods in the skies! There it is! They have it! The cursed dogs! They have touched it! Defiled it! Come with me — Kondo — Musima — Tani — Ichimon — now! At them!"

And she knew that he had retaken the flag and was bringing it gloriously back; each act was faithfully fought.

But then he missed it. He looked in his hands.

"Do you see my flag?"

"Yes," she cajoled, "it is here."

But she did not convince him, and he slept

under his opium unhappily. He thought sometimes that the enemy had again taken it.

When he awoke next morning, still unhappy and in doubt (he had not forgotten it), the flag was in his hand. There was not one in America for the little wife. But that night she made one. He shouted with sudden strength as he gripped it and kept it in his hands until they could feel no more. And then with it lashed to the foot of his bed he lived the little remnant of his life in its glory, and in sight of its crimson and white went out — mad with the supremest ecstasy a Japanese can know — out in the great red death to another reincarnation, at what, for the fourth time, he must have thought the happiest moment of his life.

And then — shall I tell it? — his call came.

And a letter from Zanzi, now a general commanding a brigade. Almost as one would write of love, he wrote.

"Come back, eta," it said joyously; "we need you now. You shall not go to the Hakodate men. Every one of us clamors for you at the colors. Come! It is war. Your doctrine prevails. There are now neither samurai nor eta, but only sons of the emperor. Come! We

are going to a glorious victory. Take your share. Your penance is complete. Your exile is finished. Come, the emperor himself calls his sons to die for him! Come! The flag waits. Come!

"ZANZI."

"PRESENT FOR DUTY"

XXVIII

"PRESENT FOR DUTY"

Of Hoshiko I do not speak — I have not spoken — in these last days. I cannot. I am near her heart as I write. She for whom everything had been had nothing — was eternally to have nothing. Yet it remained for her now to make all that be which would have been — but for her. The way of the gods was quite plain.

There was no oath to this effect, no tragic undertaking before the mysterious gods. It became simply her life. Nothing else was possible with the existences which remained but to make all true which ought to be true — which would have been true — but for her happiness. She had had that, and now was to come the recompense which the gods always demanded. And the plan of it had not consciously grown; it had been there — inside — always. Save that when she knew he was

to die the small white death, all the details formulated themselves in her mind there at his side, fixed, she had no doubt, by the gods.

We know now that the war was fought to its end in the council chambers in Tokyo long before that torpedo sank the "Tsarevitch." This is the curious fashion of the Eastern mind: to see the end before the beginning. So now all that was to follow formed itself in the mind of Hoshiko as if it were already done and she saw it not from the beginning but from the end. The means to make it be would have puzzled us. They puzzled her not at all. She knew that suffering lay there; but no suffering could matter if the end was achieved and that was safe.

In due time General Zanzi received a cable, saying: —

"Keep colors. Coming.

"SHIJIRO ARISUGA."

Then Hoshiko went to the house of Moncure Jones for the second time. The place of horror to her. That day she dressed once more in her best kimono, — she had always kept the white one, — and put the new kanzashi again in her hair, (which you will remember Arisuga bought

for her the day after she had knocked on his shoji,) and painted her face and eyes to hide their hollowness, and put upon her dainty little body the last of the "flower perfume" — which every Japanese girl saves from her marriage for her burial so that she may appear fittingly as a bride indeed before the gods above. In this matter Jones must be propitiated — made sure. She did not forget their last parting. So she went to him arrayed and adorned as she had once meant to go before the gods.

And she remembered again, and was repeating their last adjuration to fealty as she stepped upon the sill of Jones's door, those forty-seven ronins whose wives lent themselves to harlotry that their husbands might the better achieve their cause. Are they not upon brass to-day, though a thousand years have passed? Are their wives not properly forgotten?

So when she had come to Jones's house she smiled and was very gay, like a woman of joy, as she had often read had been the way of the wives of the forty-seven, and said: —

"You wish me?"

"Wish you!" cried the delighted Jones. "I have never wished for anything so much in

all my life. I have never missed any one so much. It was beastly of you to go away in that fashion. I haven't married yet."

Hoshiko was very impatient inside, but outside she smiled.

"You wish me?" she repeated.

"Yes! But that beastly husband of yours, with his knives —"

"He — is — dead," said the little woman, forcing each word out of her heart with agony, laughing shrilly at the end like a creature of pleasure.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jones.

"Ha, ha, ha," echoed Hoshiko.

"You're as glad as I am!"

"Yes," smiled Hoshiko.

"Sure he's dead?"

"By your large God!" swore the laughing wife.

"Oh! I understand. And believe you, too! All right, my little Japanese doll," cried the delighted Jones. "Here's money."

What followed I may not tell: save that Hoshiko made a cold bargain — Jones calls it his Japanese marriage to this day, — whereby she got a great deal of money in a short time.

The next day Zanzi got this cable: —

"Keep colors. Starting.

"SHIJIRO ARISUGA."

Presently (it seemed years, but it was only a little while) the time was come, and Hoshiko cut her hair, rubbed her face each morning with a rough brush, put on Arisuga's uniform, pinned his medal over her heart, and sent her last cable: —

"Keep colors. Aboard.

"SHIJIRO ARISUGA."

And so it was that the morning the Imperial Guards started for the Yalu, Shijiro Arisuga, though dead in America, answered to his name at Sendai.

But how that was accomplished, I must stop my story to tell.

THE REINCARNATION OF SHIJIRO ARISUGA

XXIX

THE REINCARNATION OF SHIJIRO ARISUGA

For I think that you will wish to know what Hoshiko did to appear learned in the trade of the soldier before she joined the Guards. But it is not easy. For I am very near her now. And the satin hands must be as leather; the tiny feet must often leave their prints in blood on the snow; the plump, pink cheeks must be pounded into caverns and scarred with wounds; the nails must be deliberately torn and broken from the exquisite hands; the beautiful hair must be shorn. And last and hardest to tell, in her forehead must be made a ragged scar like that Arisuga got at Pekin — the one which had brought him to her. That I shall tell first — the making of the wound.

For a long time she studied it. This all men knew and it must be perfect. Once she mistrusted her own skill and went to see a surgeon. She showed him the picture of Arisuga

and asked whether he could reproduce his wound upon herself. But immediately the doctor began to be wary. For he was a doctor like all other doctors, and when confronted with a thing unusual — one which no other doctor had put into the books — he was not wise.

"Ugly women," he said, "have often asked me to make them pretty. But this is the first time, in a somewhat extended practice, that I have had a pretty one ask me to make her ugly. Tell me the reason for it, and perhaps I can convince you that such beauty as the creator graciously gives us ought to be preserved, not destroyed, for it is more rare than you think."

But while he opened his case for some instrument of exploration, Hoshiko fled — so quietly and swiftly that when he turned he wondered if she had ever been there. Yes, there was in the air the flower perfume with which she had anointed her pretty body for his offices.

Of course she could run no such risk again. She must do it herself. So for long she thought upon wounds and woundings. How they were made; how they were healed; how that one of

Arisuga's had been made; how it was healed: it was a sabre, and it had cut — so. Then it had been stitched so — very carelessly she had thought every time she saw it.

She was entirely capable of striking herself with a sabre; but through long reasoning she understood that she would not be likely to reproduce the precise form of Arisuga's wound. Though this was necessary, there was only one chance in many thousands of accomplishing it.

She finally knew that she must do it carefully, slowly — very slowly. There would be none of the ecstasy of the battle. Arisuga had often told her that he had never felt the wound until it was healed. That, in fact, he would not have known that he was struck but for the blood in his eyes. But she must do it as one argues a thing. Do you understand the difference? Can you see how a wound received in hot carnage and one slowly carved in one's own flesh may differ? Be sure that Hoshiko understood all this.

But she could not in America. It seemed an alien thing to do in a country which would only have misunderstood and perhaps have laughed. It needed her native soil and atmos-

phere, and ancestors and gods, to make the undertaking simple. Besides, while she was studying the making of the wound, steam and wind were taking her home. It was there, in the little deserted house, still deserted, where they had lived so happily those few days, that everything seemed fortunate.

And so there, after much preparation, she did it — all in one tortured day. Early in the morning she sat down before her little round mirror. She knew what she was to suffer. But she neither shrank from it nor sought to mitigate its agony. First she prayed the gods — very long. Then she set his picture before her. Then she washed — very clean. Then she made very sharp the little toilet sword. Then she bound her body with many towels and made the first incision bravely. But she had not well calculated the agony of such slow self-wounding. Her senses slowly left her as if to protest against what she did.

It was long before her hands would return to their office of self-mutilation. Yet no matter how weak the flesh was, the spirit always drove the hands back to their office until it was done — and well done — to the stitches — to the

anointing — to the binding — the destruction of the quivering parts of herself.

Can you fancy her there on the floor before the little mirror which had once told back to her all her loveliness, with that little sword deliberately carving out of her own beautiful flesh with her own hand Arisuga's horrid badge of honor? She knew it so well that she limned it in her forehead as faithfully as had the Chinese sabre in his. You could not — no one could — have told the difference. There was a curious curve upward at the end, and a thickened cicatrice, as if it had been carelessly gathered up by the surgeon's needle. These she made with her own needle.

And then for many days she lay clutching her mattress, not moving for fear the contour of the wound might be marred.

That was a splendid morning to her — it would have been one of horror to you — when she could crawl from the futons and know by the glass that his wound was set forever in its place on her forehead. She did not observe that her face was vague and shadowy; her eyes saw nothing but that. Why should they see anything more?

Yet, and I must tell you this, she did see something else, presently, as she looked, day after day.

The face she saw only vaguely, at first, in her weakness, as she watched the growing into beauty of the wound, was gradually not hers. And then it seemed that behind her own a shadow face hovered. Presently she knew it for the face of Shijiro Arisuga. Then slowly her own face passed away and his was there. The difference was quite clear — it was his. And in that way she knew that the pitying gods had fully granted and completed her a reincarnation without death, and that she was no longer Hoshiko, but Arisuga.

Shall you be glad to know further that when she answered to the name of Shijiro Arisuga that morning at Sendai, (on that same Myagi Field, where Shijiro had been decorated!) all that had been the Lady Hoshi was no more? That she was like the rest of them — a ruffian? That she had an oath or two, that her voice was harsh, her words which once flowed like pleasant water few and terrible?

But she had to sing his songs, to be gay as he had been, and to be beloved as he had been.

And all these things she accomplished, even to his songs, which fled through smiling lips — laughing, shouting lips — over the graves within. For the woman always remained in some subconscious fashion, and it was upon the rebellious singing of his songs more than anything else that this latent Lady Hoshi awoke.

Yet I am certain that you will like to be told, since it must have been, that this made no difference; she made no mistakes. That she did no discredit to Shijiro Arisuga. That, in fact, in a fashion difficult to fathom, save by the doctrine of reincarnation, so had she become him in all matters of action that she never even thought of herself as Hoshiko. She was Shijiro Arisuga — when there was to be fighting — and always had been. And this was no easy thing for such a flower as Hoshiko. For Arisuga had been a man. So that, as one thinks on it, one is not irreparably offended at the possibility of Hoshiko, by a living reincarnation, having become another being. How do we know? And, how else could she have accomplished it?

But putting aside all possible differences concerning that, in this rejoice: the sun-flag was never borne with greater daring!

ZANZI, LOVER OF BATTLES

XXX

ZANZI, LOVER OF BATTLES

At Tokyo there was a contest between the Hakodate regiment and the Guards for the color-bearer who had been decorated by the emperor. Hoshiko wished to go on — mad as Arisuga once was for the fight.

(Perhaps we had better call her Arisuga from this on? Yet, you may then forget that she was Hoshiko; you may forget that each moment was a new expiation for happiness. No, we shall continue to call her Hoshiko — that you may remember.)

Said General Zanzi: —

"Stay where you are, you little fool. The Guards will move first. We are going to the greatest victory a nation ever won. Do you want to be left behind — come when it is won, and march in parade order over the field? You used to fight, you infernal little eta. What is the matter with you now? Look at me."

She did this fearlessly, for the gods were at her elbow.

"You — you — What is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Hoshiko.

"You don't seem quite the Arisuga I banished to America. But then the Americans have changed you, I suppose. They are a melancholy lot and have made you so, eh? Of course, if you are less brave than you were, the Guards don't want you. Go to the Hakodate men."

"I am not less brave," smiled Hoshiko, with a salute. "And I prefer the Guards."

"Well, I ought to have known that. Come! Drink with me."

He produced a bottle of the foreign sort, and poured her a libation of terrible brandy. She drank what she could of it and managed to spill the rest as he drank.

"Sing!"

But he gave her no opportunity.

"Oh, these burly idiots!" he cried, hot and merry with the brandy. "It is only ten years and they have already forgot! They do not know that since Shimenoseki we have prepared for this. They do not know that they have not

a secret from us. They do not know that the whole course of the war is already planned here — here — by Japan. And that as it is planned so it will be fought. Their navy first — every ship of it. Port Arthur next. Mukden! Saghalien! Vladivostock! We will meet them at the Yalu — do you hear? At the Yalu, near Wiju, where we met the Chinese in 1894, only to be robbed of victory by these Russian louts! We are decoying them to the tryst now as we did the Chinese. They will not steal our winning this time. They will pay! We shall meet them at the Yalu. And we shall meet but once there. There will not be a battlefield we will not ourselves choose. Nor a time to battle which we shall not fix. Oh, they call us little men — us! But, by the immortal gods, they will know, presently, that souls are measured not by size. They call us few; but they fail to reckon the myriad spirits of our ancestors, all the augustnesses who will fight with us, direct our bullets, lead our assaults with a knowledge which they, born of beasts, cannot have. Eta, we shall meet them at the Yalu. Wait here till you are transferred. Then on with us. Banzai!"

They laughed together, and Zanzi went out, singing of carnage as if he were beneath the window of his lady, with a samisen.

THE TOMB OF LORD ESAS

XXXI

THE TOMB OF LORD ESAS

It was but two days. Yet in that time Hoshiko hastened to all the dear places where he had gone in the days he had told her of — when he held the hand of Yoné instead of hers. It was on the second day, in the evening, at Shiba, that some one spoke his name behind her. The voice was a woman's — that she at once knew. And also at once, in that strange intelligence which we have of the spirit and not of any teaching, she knew that this was Yoné — and that she had not forgotten all and married (as they had laughingly fancied), but was still waiting, as she had said. And suddenly for a moment, only a moment, she was no longer Arisuga the color-bearer, but again a woman of those who know the terror and weariness of hopeless waiting — such as only women, and never men, know. And she remembered. It was ten years. Yet this faithful one had waited

while she had had her happiness. And what should she do? There was little question of that. Here she was confronted with the evidence of how she had destroyed the gods' balance by taking her overdue of joy, leaving to Yoné an overdue of sorrow, and was given the opportunity to restore, in some part, the account. But how? It was quite plain upon the briefest reflection. She must be to her, also, Arisuga. She must touch her as he had done, take her hands as he once did, and then — perhaps — perhaps — Yoné would be comforted and she might go.

For that moment she was a woman only — only Hoshiko — and the tears ran down her face. Now she might not turn. What? Tears on the face of a rough soldier!

"Shijiro," Yoné was saying to Hoshiko's back, "I have waited — waited all the years. Yet had they been ten times ten they are all blotted out by this moment. Oh, the gods have been true, as they always are! I prayed them, and they let me know that they would bring you to me if I would but wait patiently. Turn and look at me. See whether I am grown too old for you to touch once more. See

whether my hands are yet fit for yours. I have prayed Benten to keep me young and make me beautiful against this moment of your coming. And every day — every day, Ani-San — I have come here, whether it rained or the sun shone — every day — here or at Mukojima — or the other dear places of our youth. And yet my sandals are not worn, my kimono is new — see, because ever I renewed them, remembering that you liked me always so. Will you not look, beloved? Yoné will not trouble you if you do not wish. She will let you go and will wait still."

Hoshiko slowly turned. Yoné stepped back from her. So they stood a moment at gaze. Hoshiko saw a creature as small and fragile as she herself had once been, and more beautiful she thought — much more beautiful.

Yoné saw a soldier whose face she knew, but whose soul, at first, was strange.

"I am Shijiro Arisuga," said Hoshiko.

"Yes," breathed Yoné, "wait. There is something strange. Something I did not expect. Is it the years? Yes. But your voice is more gentle though less gay."

"I can make it harsh," smiled Hoshiko.

"Nay!" cried Yoné, still at gaze. "Did you know me? Did you know my voice?"

"Yes," said Hoshiko.

"And you have a scar — you have fought."

"In many battles."

"Yet the gods did not send you the great red death, but sent you to me, as I prayed."

"Yes."

"It is all the gods' will."

Twilight had fallen and Yoné came confidently closer.

"Will you walk with me as we used? It is the gods' will!"

"Yes."

"Will you take my hand?"

"Yes."

As Hoshiko felt the small hand curl in hers the tears fell again from her eyes. But they could not be seen now and she let them fall. Nor need she talk and thus betray herself. Yoné had lost all fear in the giving of her hand and now chattered on.

"Come — to the tomb of Lord Esas, where we made the seat of a stone and moss. It is there yet. I have kept it as it was. Often I have sat there. Only once before were we

here at night — hiding, as perhaps we shall to-night, when the watchman comes with his lantern and staff. Shall we go to the tomb of Lord Esas, beloved?"

"Yes," said Hoshiko.

"You speak as if you wept — and, when you turned, your face looked as if you had wept. Oh, it looked for a moment like a woman's — and not a soldier's! Soldiers do not weep."

"Soldiers weep. I do."

"Ani-San! For me?"

"For you."

"The waiting?"

"The waiting."

"But, then, weep no more, Ani-San. I am here — at your side. All the waiting is forgot. Blotted out by this one great moment. And perhaps — Here is the seat. Is it not all as it was? Though it is ten years — ten years of weary waiting. Here you sat, always, here I sat. And we are grown too old now to change."

She laughed timorously, and when Hoshiko had seated herself where Arisuga had once sat, she took her place as if there were no years between this and that. Then she went on: —

"— perhaps, to-night, you will be as sweet

as you were on that other night — when — Do you remember?"

"I remember," said Hoshiko.

"But we have no samisen. Yet I can sing — if you ask me —"

"Sing."

"— the song of 'The Moon-and-the-Stork,' which we ourselves made — here — where the moon looked down upon us. See, it knows. It knows you are come. There it passes above the great criptomeria now. And — and — oh, it is an omen of all good! A stork flies over its face. Or it is a branch of the tree? No matter, the omen is the same, Ani-San; all is as it was, is it not?"

"All is as it was, beloved," whispered Hoshiko.

Yoné came diffidently closer at the dear word.

"When I sang that night I was in your arms —"

The arms of Hoshiko closed about the girl at her side almost with violence.

"That is it," she cried happily, nesting there. "Yes, that is quite it. Don't you remember how your violence frightened me until you explained that it was love? And we laughed.

Now we are sad. We used to laugh then. And you could not play the samisen because I was in your arms. And I would not get out of them. So that I sang without the samisen that night. Therefore, all will be quite the same if I sing to-night without it. You have not forgotten the Moon-and-the-Stork song?"

"No" — for Arisuga had often sung it to her.

Then she sang: —

"O moon get out of my way," said the stork,
"O stork get out of my light," said the moon.
"I will not," said the stork,
"I will not," said the moon:
So that is why the stork is in the light of the moon,
And that is why the moon is in the way of the stork.

It was a little voice, with no great melody, but well fitted for so frail a theme. Hoshiko joined her, stumbling upon a word, at which Yoné chided her for forgetting, laughed happily and crept yet closer. Then she said, after a silence: —

"Now!"

"What?" asked Hoshiko; for that she did not know.

"Oh, have you forgotten — have you for-

gotten? That also? Alas — alas! After the song you spoke of —"

Her pretty head was burrowed deeply into the space beneath Hoshiko's chin.

"What?" Hoshiko had to ask again.

"Of marriage," whispered the girl, in terror. And the terror of Hoshiko was no less than that of Yoné.

"You said, you swore by this sacred tomb of a hero, that if the gods did not send you the red death we should be married one to the other —"

"But, beloved," breathed Hoshiko, in further terror, "I am still a soldier, still bound to the great red death. I am here but this day. To-morrow, this night yet, I go to battle. Would you wish me to marry you and at once go to the field?"

"Yes," whispered the girl.

"And, perchance, fall and never return?"

"Yes."

"So that you will be a widow with blackened teeth?"

"Yes."

Hoshiko made no other protest. What had been first considered with a certain horror,

seemed beautiful and merciful to this love-lorn maiden now. She need never know. She would live and die thinking herself married to Arisuga. At her death she would cut her hair and hang it at a shrine, and always keep the lamps alight, and always pray for the soul of Shijiro Arisuga. It was the way of the gods; and, as always, the way of the gods was best, was beautiful!

WHEN THE WATCH PASSED

XXXII

WHEN THE WATCH PASSED

"SH! sh!" whispered Yoné, suddenly, and crushed her small hand upon Hoshiko's mouth.

It was the watchman with staff and lantern, crying weirdly in the night. He passed near. He paused nearer. Yoné drew a bit of shrubbery before them.

"I heard a song, by all the gods I heard a foolish song in this sacred place of tombs. Come forth," he cried aloud, "he who sings foolishly in a sacred place, come forth and be punished of the gods so that you may repent! Otherwise your punishment will wait until you are unready for it."

Now he moved on. His voice came muttering back: —

"Come forth, come forth! I heard a song, an unholy song in the sacred place of tombs."

Yoné let the bush return and laughed happily in the arms of Hoshiko.

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"Oh, is it not all as it was, beloved? It is the same watchman — older. And they are the same, almost the same, words — more eery. And we are close, close — as we were then. Oh, it is divine to be close with you! So — so, my beloved, another omen! Everything else is as it was. Shall not we be?"

Hoshiko was silent.

"Be not afraid, beloved," Yoné said. "I will be true always until we meet in the heavens. Always I will be your widow with blackened teeth if you fall — my hair blowing at a shrine. Think! But for me there will be no one to keep the lamps alight before you if you die — but for me. And I — they shall never fail. For, if you fall, I will wait as I have done — keeping the lamps, hoping that you will hold out your hand in the black Meido when I pass to death, and that then we shall, somehow, never part. Oh, beloved, there have been suitors and suitors and always suitors! The nakado has worn bare the mat at the door. But was I not yours? How could I listen to any one else? And the wedding garments are all ready. And there is no one to stay us but the old deaf Hana, who will not even

hear. If you must go quickly, to-night, there is the foreign minister — there is the new registry office —"

"And for this," said Hoshiko, "the few words of a foreign priest, nine cups of saké, a line in the registry office, you will give up your dear life to me?"

"I will give up all my souls — all my hope of a rest at last in Buddha's bosom if I must. Oh, Shijiro Arisuga, for this I have waited until it seemed that I could wait no more. Give it to me now — this night — before you go!"

"O love," whispered Hoshiko, "what is like you in all the earths, in all the heavens! There is no other miracle but you alone. Come! My hour is almost here. But were it already past, and though a soldier but obeys the hours, yet you should be a wife before I go."

And even to that moment Hoshiko had not known how Yoné yearned for that one word to be added to her. Suddenly she grovelled on the earth and caught the hands and knees of her who had been wife to him they both loved.

"All the gods bless you — all the gods —

for giving me that one name. For in all the earths and heavens together there is none so sweet as — wife to Shijiro Arisuga."

And there, that night, Hoshiko married little Yoné.

"Now go and die," she wept at farewell, "and here I will wait — wait, until I, also, die — wait for that touch of your spirit on my arm, wait for your hand in the dark Meido. But if you do not die? if the gods are not ready yet for you — you will come?"

"I will come again," said Hoshiko, weeping, too, which was strange for a soldier.

And there they parted, only a moment after they were married, and Hoshiko was ordered to join the Guards and hurry to the Yalu, where their prey was fattening.

TEIKOKU BANZAI

XXXIII

TEIKOKU BANZAI

THEN, at last, after three months of marching and wading and six days of fighting, they faced the Russian intrenchments at that place beyond Wiju, which some call, to this day, Hamatan, but which is Yujuho. And the Imperial Guards were there. Shijiro Arisuga, if he were there, also, must have observed with joy that the Guards had the right of the line and would reach the Russian intrenchments first — perhaps off toward Kiuliencheng, where the battery of six pieces was still stubbornly firing. He would know that the Guards must give many happy ones their opportunity for the great red death. Perhaps he could, then, see far enough into the future to know that his own regiment would have the advance and be cut to pieces. It would hurl itself straight upon those stubborn guns. They would tear bloody lanes in its ranks. And Hoshiko would be in the forefront of it.

Kuroki's artillery ceased, Zassuliche's ceased, and that stillness which the soldier knows for the prelude to the assault fell. The two shots from the right was the advance. Zanzi raised his hand, and into the smoke raced Hoshiko with the colors. And she did not forget Arisuga's glory — nor his father's — nor that dream of his when the small white death was closing down upon him. She understood that he was there. And not only he.

His ancestors were looking on — the stately samurai. And hers — the humble eta. His father whom she here redeemed. The emperor with his thousand eyes. The myriads of the gods. The army. The world. The heavens!

Yet she forgot nothing which Arisuga had taught her. She went forward with two others. To her right, to her left, were other threes zigzagging onward. But always she was in their front — steadily, carefully, almost to where the battery of six pieces had fixed a point to reach her, as she passed. There her three dropped and dug. And there they rested until the battery lost them. Up then and out again till the gunners once more noted her like a moving lump of earth and corrected their elevation

in her favor. And so twice more. At the last she dared to look back. Behind her stretched two lines of trenches. In the nearest a little fringe of rifle muzzles already showed. She had brought these there. Further back was a thin line of blue racing for the first trenches. She had set these going. Still further back the army in vast masses of blue was moving into position from behind the willows on the bank of the river.

And these waited also upon the little sun-flag on which Hoshiko lay. She felt for the first time the soldier's ecstasy, and she understood better and forgave more the latter years of Arisuga.

She and her two had rested, and had made of their chain of holes a shallow trench. They meant to dig this deeper for those who were to come after them. But the two vast armies they had set in motion began to move with accelerated speed toward each other, and they stopped the trench where it was.

There would be no more digging. Any one might see that. The Russian battery had again found them. One of the guns was exploding shrapnel over their heads. The rest

were trying for the thin blue line further back. The willows which yet hid the army were too far away. The moment was ripe. Hoshiko threw aside the spade and everything else which might impede action, and went toward the battery.

From behind her rose the hoarse mongolian yell she had learned to love. There was no need now for concealment. Their own guns had located the battery in her front. A wicked shell had just burst over it. She could hear the song of the fragments. And but three men stood by the gun afterward. The little figure with the sun-flag raced down upon them, firing. It was quite alone. The three gave her a weak, magnanimous cheer and retired, leaving their gun.

Her own men answered from the rear. And even amid the "Banzais" she could hear the wild song of Arisuga. One line clanged in her mad brain: —

"Death-wound spurting —"

Further up the hill a single rapid-fire gun which knew her only as an enemy came into action. It found her at once and riddled her with bullets, as, flag in hand, she leaped into the first of the Russian trenches.

That line was in her last articulate consciousness: —

"Death-wound spurting —"

Perhaps it only remained in her ears — Arisuga's song. But she fancied that she could feel her own warm blood spurting into her own face. Was it as glorious as he had thought it? Or was it only terrible? At that moment, first, she knew. Perhaps she became in that last instant all woman once more. Perhaps she saw something not for mortal eyes. Perhaps she was not as brave with death as she had taught herself to be — gentle Hoshiko! Her lips moaned, piteously, when she ought to have been dead, "Arisuga!"

So that one of the two who had gone forward with her bent hastily and said to the other, with a pleasant smile: —

"He speaks his own name!"

"Nembutsu," answered the other. "Take the flag."

The first one tried, but it held fast in her hand.

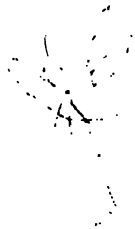
"There is no need," he said; "the battle is won. Let him keep it!"

But they covered her face. For the peace,

the ecstasy, of a glorious death was not on it! What did she learn in that death-instant?

Others caught at the flag. But her hand held it fast. So that when that dense line of blue which she had started from the willows reached her, at first it parted chivalrously at the flag and passed on either side. But at last it could not part. Some one trod upon the little color-bearer. Then many. The thick-massed line passed over her. It could not be helped. Some one took the flag from her hand and planted it on the Russian redoubt. At last she seemed but part of the earth beneath their feet, and they who trod on her did not even look down.

AFTERWARD



XXXIV

AFTERWARD

AFTERWARD there was a great funeral. The hillside was a temple. The summer blue was its roof. The jagged mountains were its eaves. Evergreen trees were its walls. A torii made of firs was its gate. Blossoming trees held the gohei strips which pledged purity to the august shades which waited near. The altar was of rifles and a soldier's blanket. The offerings were the vapors of the simple grains and flowers of the country.

Beyond it was the great pyre — not grim, as death is, but more beautiful than that on which Dido perished, adorned, perfumed, with aromatic spring firs and blossoming trees. In the temple, first, the shades of those who had fought with them were worshipped and exalted by the brocaded priests. Then fealty was sworn to those who had just died, and whose shades yet lingered by their greatest incarnation.

Last, Nisshi read the names of those who had died with glory. And first among them was that of Shijiro Arisuga. Then with others they put the blackened, riven little body they had found, upon the pyre, and, lighting it, gave Hoshiko's ashes to the earth, her spirit to oblivion, and Arisuga's name to honor.

It began the next day. Shijiro Arisuga was in the Tokyo newspapers, upon the dead walls, and in the hoarse voices of the people. It was a story like the terrible courage of their old warriors, and they loved it. His medal was hung in a temple. And to-day there is a record of his heroism, on the brass where it can never fade — though Shijiro Arisuga lies dead, unknown, in America.

And that was the fifth time that Shijiro Arisuga must have thought the happiest moment of his life had come.

And now we may speculate a little, before we forget, upon this last of the five occasions. For there may be those who think that Shijiro could not have been happy in seeing what he saw that day. But we are to remember that, then, he had knowledge of many things which he had not on earth. And

among these was a more intimate knowing of the heart of Hoshiko. And in that, it seems to me, he ought to have been happiest of all. Yet — who knows?

Perhaps, too, the merciful gods permitted themselves to be deceived into thinking that the Shijiro Arisuga who died at Hamatan is, indeed, the one who died at Jokoji. For the life name is the same. Or perhaps they are only complaisant, and, in the passing years, will permit the people to think that this is so. Who knows?

At all events, Shijiro Arisuga, father and son, will take their way hand in hand from the dark Meido to the heavens.

And for these some one will reverently write a splendid death name upon a golden tablet at a beautiful shrine. And before it will burn always the lights and the incense. Perhaps this happiness will be for gentle Yoné. Perhaps the spirit of her who died at Hamatan, in its boundless compassion, will also come and touch the little Yoné on the arm as she wanders, lonely, by the tomb of Lord Esas, so that she, too, may have her heart's desire, and only one, she who bought her happiness with an

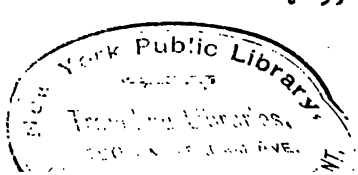
eternity of obliteration, have nothing. For, who knows?

And one wishes it were possible for Shijiro to have defied O-Emma of the hells and to have taken Hoshiko straight from the great red death, past all the lesser heavens, to be forever lost in the bosom of the Lord Buddha in the lotus fields — if the souls of mortals ever fly straight from earth to the last white heaven. But this could not be. There was that eternal penance for over-joy to accomplish.

For Hoshiko there never can be again, in the heavens above or on the earth beneath or the hells below, a being. All her existences — all her thousands of years of life — whether of the earths or the heavens or the hells, were given for Shijiro Arisuga, whom she loved — and who once, for a little while, loved her. Shijiro Arisuga lives, and the father in the son will live on the brass forever.

The Dream-of-a-Star is forever vanished, save for the moment I write here — save for the moment you read here.

S.S.



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